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**SIN MAN ADA LEUNG UM ESTUDO DE CASO DE RESPOSTAS  
INSTITUCIONAIS A INTERNACIONALIZAÇÃO**

**A CASE STUDY OF INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSES TO  
INTERNATIONALISATION**



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Dissertação apresentada à Universidade de Aveiro para cumprimento dos requisitos necessários à obtenção do grau de Mestre em Ensino Superior, realizada sob a orientação científica da Dra. Maria Teresa Geraldo Carvalho, Coordenadora Pedagógica da Licenciatura em Administração Pública, Professora Auxiliar da Secção Autónoma de Ciências Sociais, Jurídicas e Políticas da Universidade de Aveiro.

Thesis presented to the University of Aveiro to fulfil the formalities essential to obtain the degree of European Master in Higher Education (Erasmus Mundus) done under the scientific supervision of Dr. Teresa M. Carvalho, Professor Auxiliar de University of Aveiro.

Dedication to my mom, my sisters and brother, my friends, my alma mater, my city, and my Lord.

## **o júri**

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## palavras-chave

Ensino Superior; Internacionalização; Mudança Organizacional; Hong Kong; Universidade de Hong Kong

## Resumo

Esta investigação explora os mecanismos subjacentes ao processo de internacionalização nas instituições de ensino superior. A investigação está alicerçada nos princípios da investigação qualitativa e na lógica da abordagem indutiva. A Universidade de Hong Kong (UHK) foi seleccionada como estudo de caso tendo a entrevista semi-estruturada sido utilizada como meio para obter as percepções dos actores institucionais chave relativas às mudanças actuais nos processos e nas actividades de internacionalização bem como nos mecanismos que sustentam estas mudanças.

Na primeira parte desta investigação procede-se a uma revisão da literatura e análise do conceito de internacionalização e da teoria de mudança organizacional. Com base na teoria do institucionalismo, diferentes mecanismos são identificados como relevantes na explicação do processo de internacionalização nas universidades.

A segunda parte diz respeito à apresentação dos resultados da análise dos dados. A investigação revela-nos que a internacionalização está a ser activamente desenvolvida na UHK com mudanças importantes identificadas nos últimos anos. Apesar da análise documental das políticas governamentais revelar alguma influência nas actividades e processos de internacionalização na UHK, os actores institucionais percebem o papel do governo como limitativo, demonstrando que as forças coercivas não constituem o único elemento capaz de estimular estes processos. Em face das tendências de internacionalização e globalização, as instituições de ensino superior procuram respostas através da busca do (re)posicionamento e da comparabilidade. Mecanismos como a comparabilidade, o posicionamento, a criação de uma dada imagem e a reputação são importantes elementos miméticos que exercem pressões sobre as universidades no sentido da internacionalização. Não se limitando a receber estas pressões e exigências de forma passiva, os actores institucionais interpretam-nas, antes, de acordo com a história, cultura e valores da própria instituição. Mais importante ainda, a universidade é em si mesmo uma organização internacional cujas actividades se desenvolvem além fronteiras. A internacionalização é para a universidade não apenas o resultado de pressões externas mas, igualmente, uma necessidade interna e um fim em si mesmo.

Na última parte desta tese são expostas as limitações da presente investigação e apresentadas recomendações para investigações futuras.

**Keywords**

Higher Education; Internationalisation; Organisational Change; Hong Kong; University of Hong Kong

**Abstract**

This research explores the mechanisms which underlie the process of internationalisation in higher education institutions. The overall research design stands strictly on the principles of qualitative research and the logic of deductive-inductive reasoning. The University of Hong Kong (HKU) is selected as a case study and interviews are used to gather the perceptions of key institutional actors on the current changes in internationalisation activities and the mechanisms underlying such changes.

In the first part of this research, a literature review and analysis on the concept of internationalisation and theory of organisational change was conducted. Based on the institutional theory, different mechanisms emerged as relevant to explain the internationalisation processes in universities.

The second part of the research is the presentation of fieldwork findings which reveal that internationalisation is taking place actively and rigorously in HKU, and changes in such activities in recent years are obvious. Though reviews and analyses of government policies show that they affect the activities and process of internationalisation in HKU, institutional actors perceive the role of government is limited and coercive force is not the only factor leading to internationalisation. In face of globalisation and internationalisation trend, higher education institutions also respond by positioning and benchmarking themselves. In addition, ranking, branding and reputation are exerting mimetic pressures on universities to internationalise. Instead of responding to all the pressures and demands passively, institutional actors interpret and screen through them in accordance with the history, culture, tradition, norms and values of the institution. Most important of all, university is itself an international organisation with activities stretching across boundaries. To them, internationalisation is not only a means to react to external pressure but also an intrinsic need and end in itself. Therefore, internationalisation is the result of the interplay of coercive, mimetic and normative forces, and changes in the regulative, cultural-cognitive and normative pillars of the University.

In the last part of the thesis, significance and limitations of this research are presented, and recommendations for future research are offered.

## **Preface**

Not to deny, internationalisation is a global trend and a vivid phenomena today, which I fully experience. My interest in internationalisation of higher education started six years ago when I was assigned to work on an internationalisation programme for students in Hong Kong Baptist University. I worked on that project for four years, before I left for Europe to take up the European Master in Higher Education (HEEM) Programme, which is also an internationalisation programme initiated by the European Union under the Erasmus Mundus Scholarship. From the programme, I discover, learn and reflect a lot on the field of higher education. After being an implementer and a participant, this research now offers me the chance to be a researcher to investigate into the subject matter of higher education.

More than a research process, this thesis is a learning journey for me. It enables me to look at the dynamics and changes of higher education, and more specifically, learn more about my place (Hong Kong) and my alma mater (the University of Hong Kong). Moreover, conducting interviews is really interesting. Interview is not only a tool for me to dig deeper into the phenomena and obtain an intuitive perspective that can seldom be felt from documents, it also gives me the opportunity to speak very direct and face-to-face with some active actors and prominent scholars in Hong Kong. Their views and ideas are stimulating and refreshing. It is the precious data they provided that form the core and essence of this research. As a researcher, my role is to facilitate such data to speak out itself by organising, linking and presenting them. The processes of interview and data collection help to build up my confidence of being a field researcher in future. The whole journey is very explorative and full of discovery, excitement and joy.

Knowledge comes from the process of accumulation. The successful completion of this thesis is not the work of one's, but contribution from many. Previous research and works of scholars on higher education in Hong Kong, Europe and around the world is the foundation for my work. Without them, there will not be this thesis here. Thanks for what these scholars and researchers have done. As one of my interviewees said, instead of “Westernization” or “Americanization”, internationalisation should encompass multi-cultural forms and regional sensitivity. It implies the acceptance of diversity and appreciation of differences. For researchers in Hong Kong and Asia, our role is to make contribution to the international community on understanding Asia. Although small in size, Hong Kong is really a charming, energetic and international place. I am so glad that I can

work on an issue related to it and reveal its special characteristic as a place where the West meets the East. Last but not least, thanks again for all the people, met or unmet, for making this thesis completed and able to form a tiny part of the accumulated knowledge for higher education!

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## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

During the past few decades, international dimension in higher education (HE) is becoming increasingly complex. World trend and globalisation forces have accelerated their pace of internationalisation. Under intensified pressures for survival and improving their competence, higher education institutions (HEIs) have to adopt a wide range of internationalisation strategies. This study is designed to examine the existing internationalisation activities in the University of Hong Kong (HKU), their extent and nature of change, and to explain the underlying mechanisms leading to such changes. This first chapter will give an overview of the whole research. It lists out the central research questions, outlines the structure of the study, provides the basic information of the higher education system in Hong Kong and the University of Hong Kong.

### **1.1 Research Questions**

The central questions of the research are:

1. What are the mechanisms underlying internationalisation in higher education institutions?
2. How does university respond to internationalisation?

These two main research questions are divided into the following sub-questions:

- i. How can internationalisation activities in HKU be characterised?
- ii. Are there any changes in the internationalisation activities of HKU in recent years?
- iii. Do government policies contribute to the changes in these internationalisation

activities?

- iv. What are the institutional actors' perceptions about the mechanisms that stimulate internationalisation in HKU?

## **1.2 Structure of the Study**

The whole study is divided into six chapters. Chapter one introduces the purpose of this study, the research questions, the higher education system in Hong Kong and the University of Hong Kong. In chapter two, there is a review of literature on internationalisation and organisational changes. It first examines the meanings, concept and rationales of internationalisation. Then, the programme strategies for internationalisation categorised by Jane Knight, and the institutional theory which explains organisational changes based on the three pillars (regulative, normative and cultural-cognitive) of an institution are introduced. The institutional theory will form the theoretical framework of this research, from which, assumptions about the underlying mechanisms of internationalisation in HKU are deducted.

Chapter three describes the research methodology in details. This research uses a case study to discover why and how internationalisation is being taken place in higher education institutions. The data collection methods include document reviews, policy analyses and interviews. Document reviews and policy analyses are expected to reveal the role of government in influencing internationalisation in HKU. Interviews gather institutional actors' perceptions on the impact of the three pillars on internationalisation. These different data sources help to triangulate the findings, which are presented in chapters four and five.

Chapter four depicts the main internationalisation activities and changes (what) perceived by the institutional actors in HKU. They are categorized according to the

programme strategies put forward by Knight. In chapter five, perceptions of the institutional actors on the components of the three pillars, and their impact on the changes of internationalisation strategies and activities in HKU are discussed. The final chapter is a conclusion, which points out the significance and limitation of this study, and provides some suggestions for future research.

### **1.3 Higher Education in Hong Kong**

As a British colony for more than 150 years (1842-1997), the education system in Hong Kong was established by the former British colonial administration in accordance with the British model (Morris et al., 1994). Up till now, Hong Kong has 12 degree-awarding higher education institutions, of which nine are universities and eight are funded by the University Grant Committee (UGC)<sup>1</sup>. The eight UGC-funded institutions are City University of Hong Kong (CityU), Hong Kong Baptist University (HKBU), Lingnan University (LU), The Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK), The Hong Kong Institute of Education (HKIEd), The Hong Kong Polytechnic University (PolyU), The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (HKUST) and The University of Hong Kong (HKU). The other four non-UGC funded institutions are Chu Hai College of Higher Education, Hong Kong Shue Yan University (HKSJU), the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts (HKAPA) and the Open University of Hong Kong (OUHK) (Table 1 in Appendix 2).

The University of Hong Kong (HKU), the first university in Hong Kong, was established in 1911 by incorporating of the College of Medicine established in 1887. The

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<sup>1</sup> The University Grants Committee (UGC) was set up in Hong Kong in 1965 to give “advice on the development and funding of higher education and to administer public grants to the eight higher education institutions.” (HKSAR, 2007a: 151).

second university, CUHK, was established in 1963 with the merger of three post-secondary colleges of New Asia College (founded in 1949), Chung Chi College (founded in 1951) and United College (founded in 1956). The two Polytechnic universities in Hong Kong, The Hong Kong Polytechnic University and City Polytechnic University of Hong Kong (formerly known as The Hong Kong Polytechnic and City Polytechnic of Hong Kong), were established in 1972 and 1984 respectively and were awarded full university statuses together with Hong Kong Baptist University (established in 1956 as Hong Kong Baptist College) in 1994 (HKSAR, 1997a; UGC, 1996).

The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology was established in 1991 with the idea initiated by the then Governor Edward Youde, as an Asian equivalent of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) (Wong, 2004), whereas the Lingnan University (formerly known as Lingnan College) was founded in Hong Kong in 1976 and acquired its full university status in 1999. The HKIEd was established in 1994 by merging four former colleges of education and the Institute of Language in Education (HKSAR, 1997a; UGC, 1996). It is currently the only UGC-funded non-university HE institution in Hong Kong. Altogether, these eight UGC-funded institutions provide around 14,500 first-year-first-degree places for 18 per cent of the 17-20 year-old age group in Hong Kong (HKSAR, 2007a).

#### **1.4 The University of Hong Kong**

The University of Hong Kong (HKU) was founded as Hong Kong's first university in 1911 with the effort of the then governor, Sir Frederick Lugard. He then became the first Chancellor of the University after its establishment. Today, HKU is a dynamic, comprehensive university with world-class standing, reputation and recognition. With its excellent academic standard and record on internationalisation, the University was ranked

by the “Times Higher Education – QS World University Ranking” (THE ranking) as 33<sup>rd</sup> in 2005 and 2006; 18<sup>th</sup> in 2007 and 26<sup>th</sup> in 2008 (HKU, 2007b; HKU, 2008a).

In terms of academic structure, the University is subdivided into faculties, departments and schools. At its establishment, the University had only three faculties: Medicine, Engineering and Arts. Approaching its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2011, the University now has ten faculties, including these three plus the Faculties of Social Sciences (established in 1967), Education (established in 1976), Dentistry (established in 1982), Architecture (established in 1984), Law (established in 1984), Business and Economics (established in 2001) and School of Professional and Continuing Education (HKU SPACE) (HKU, 2008a) (HKU, 2008a), and over 20,000 students. In 2007-08, there were 12,409 full-time UGC-funded students, of which 9,976 were undergraduates and 2,433 were postgraduates. Figures on the UGC-funded enrolment in the last four years are shown in Table 2. In addition to local students, the University also welcomes non-local students from Mainland China and all over the world. In 2007-8, there were about 3,300 non-local students in the campus (HKU, 2009f).

In terms of internal governance, the University still largely follows the British tradition. The Chief Executive of Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) is the Chancellor and nominal head of the University. The main governance structures are the Court, the Council, the Senate and the Boards of the Faculties (HKU, 2008a). Due to its British heritage, it enjoys a substantial degree of autonomy in the control of curricula, academic standards, selection of staff and students, and internal allocation of resources (Shils and Roberts, 2004). Since its early days, English has been the main working language in HKU. Further details of the history and development of the University will be presented in Chapter Five under the discussion of the normative pillar.

## **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

This chapter is a literature review on the concept of internationalisation in higher education and theory on organisational change. The discussion on the concept of internationalisation starts from the notion of nation states, followed by the relationship between internationalisation and globalisation, the diversity of rationales underlying internationalisation and the argument of competition and cooperation in internationalisation. Then, the programme strategies for internationalisation suggested by Jane Knight (2005) are listed out, which will be used to categorize the internationalisation activities in HKU in chapter four. The last part of this chapter focuses on theory of organisational change, particularly the institutional theory and the notions of isomorphisms. They will be used to construct the theoretical framework and provide explanation on the changes of internationalisation in this study.

### **2.1 The Concept of Internationalisation**

#### **2.1.1 Internationalisation and the Nation States**

Describing and defining internationalisation is quite complex. University is inherently international. The process of establishing knowledge, the desire and effort to enhance the quality of research and the cooperation for the advancement of science push research activities across borders and contribute to the international character of research and academic activities. In fact, some scholars argued that internationalisation is not a new concept. Looking back to the Middle Ages, students and scholars wandered across Europe for teaching and study (De Wit, 2000). With a common religious belief, a uniform scholarly language (Latin), and a standardised study programme (the studium generale), internationalisation occurred in the form of mobility as students moved and were attracted

to institutions beyond their local regions.

However, Neave (2001) commented that this phenomenon should not be classified as “international mobility” and at most only “inter-territorial” as it was the time that the concept of nations still not yet existed. Similarly, Scott (1998) argued that only very few universities can claim to have a century-old international tradition. It is because, even though modern university was born in the beginning of 11<sup>th</sup> century, most universities nowadays are creations of the nation states in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. They are national institutions under the states, which are responsible for steering, funding and setting policy for them.

### **2.1.2 Internationalisation and Globalisation**

The concept of internationalisation is a confusing one, conveying a wide variety of meanings in different contexts by different people. Traditionally, internationalisation mainly concerned mobility which based on personal network and coordination of individual academic staff. It focused on academic cooperation and exchanges within disciplinary specialties, and involved only a minority of students. This kind of international mobility was expected to contribute to academic learning, cultural awareness and international understanding (Luijten-Lub, 2007). It was not regarded as a mainstream activity of the university, and was seldom supported by any university units or infrastructures, such as the international office (Teekens, 2004).

From the mid 1990s, internationalisation has started to form a major theme in higher education, when the concept of traditional internationalisation becomes intertwined with globalisation (Luijten-Lub, 2007). Despite so, they are different concepts with different meanings. Moved by liberalisation of international trade and global markets, globalisation

emphasizes the increasing convergence and interdependence of economies and societies. With increasing integration of regulatory systems, boundaries between states become blurred and the role of nation-states diminishes. It is argued that globalisation will end up with de-nationalisation (van der Wende, 2004). On the other hand, internationalisation refers to the relationship between different nations, or between single institutions situated within different national systems. It foresees nation-states will continue to function as bounded economic, social and cultural systems. As nation states become more interconnected and cross-border activities increase, national policies put a stronger emphasis on regulating or facilitating these activities (Van de Wende, 2004). In higher education, the notion of internationalisation stresses the interconnectedness of national education systems.

In discussing the relationship between globalisation and internationalisation, different authors perceive it in different ways. For example, van der Wende (2007) sees internationalisation as a response to globalisation, whereas Scott proclaims the two concepts are neither linear or cumulative, nor one form higher than the other, but dialectical. He argued that “not all universities are international, but all universities are subject to the same process of globalization” (1998:122) either as victims or key players. In Europe, it can be observed that not only individual institutions but also entire national higher education systems are now changing under the influences and external pressure of internationalisation, Europeanisation and globalisation from higher levels (van der Wende, 1997). Education policy has become more internationalised and more often being discussed and implemented in supranational or international contexts. Internationalisation is now more institutionalised at both organisational and system levels (Wächter, 2004).

### **2.1.3 Diversity of Rationales**

Today, a mix of underlying rationales and activities for internationalisation can be observed, and more actors on different levels are involved (van der Wende and Huisan, 2004). Van der Wende (2002, based on Blumenthal et al., 1996) distinguished four values or rationales which are relevant in understanding internationalisation in higher education: the academic, cultural, political and economic rationales. Each of them implies a different means and end to internationalisation. Academic value rationalizes internationalisation as a means of enhancing the quality of education and research. Cultural rationale justifies internationalisation for the enhancement of mutual understanding and knowledge of different cultures. Political rationale suggests internationalisation as a strategy for nation-building and economic reform. Last but not least, economic rationale is related to the competitive power and stance of a country, an education system or an individual institution in the international market of higher education. Tracing back to medieval Europe and Arabic world, academic and cultural rationales were already dominant values underlying internationalisation, when scholars wandered around to seek for knowledge and understanding of other cultures. Up till today, universities still have incentives from the inside to internationalise.

In comparison with the persistence of academic and cultural values, political and economic rationales undergo more changes (De Wit, 2000). For example, in Europe, the importance of political rationale in internationalisation was particularly prevalent during the development of nation-states, and the era of colonial expansion, when the European models of higher education were spread and reproduced in colonies in the Americas, Africa and Asia to demonstrate the political, cultural, economic and academic dominance of the colonial powers. Similarly, for the USA, its rise of political and economic influences as an

international power encouraged the Americans to learn the knowledge, cultures and languages of other systems so as to maintain and expand their influences. As a result, area studies, foreign languages and study abroad programmes began to flourish (Luijten-Lub, 2007).

After the cold war, emphasis on internationalisation changed from political to economic rationales. On the one hand, the transformation of society to knowledge-driven economies changes the education and training needs of countries. Education and internationalisation activities are expected to improve the international competitiveness of the higher education sector and that of national economy. As a result, university is more linked to increased economic performance of the knowledge-economy. On the other hand, with the New Public Management Reform, application of market discourse becomes prevalent in non-commercial domains. Facing stringent resources from government and competitive demands from other social sectors, public funding for higher education decreases and universities are expected to become self-reliant and entrepreneurial (Slaughter and Leslie, 1997). They need to adopt more aggressive approaches on the recruitment of international students and position themselves in the international market. In this context, higher education turns into an export commodity for earning income for the institutions and countries (Scott, 2004).

#### **2.1.4 Competition and Cooperation**

The trend towards more economically oriented rationales for internationalisation can also be viewed as the result of competition in internationalisation activities. According to van der Wende (2004), approaches to internationalisation can be distinguished between competition and cooperation. Both are ways to respond to the pressures of globalisation and internationalisation. Competition is more often associated with globalisation, which

involves the increasing integration of flows and processes over and across borders. It is especially true in those English speaking countries, such as the UK and Australia, where marketisation and entrepreneurship are going hand in hand with internationalisation (van der Wende, 2001). As a result, internationalisation policies on student mobility and transnational education gain importance and new relevance. They become the means to generate income by attracting more foreign fee-paying students to study at the home institutions or off-shore campuses. To respond and survive, universities join the competition of student recruitment in the global market.

In contrast, internationalisation in Europe is more associated with the cooperation approach. Both the Bologna Declaration and Lisbon Strategy can be regarded as cooperative responses to globalisation and internationalisation on the European level (van der Wende, 2004). By agreeing on the establishment of a “European Higher Education Area” by 2010, the Bologna Declaration signed in 1999 aims to increase the competitiveness and attractiveness of European higher education through cooperation among the signatory countries. Similarly, in the Lisbon Summit in 2000, leaders of the European Union agreed on the strategic target of making Europe to become the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion by 2010. Though these two processes are different in ownership, rationales and level of involvement by the European Union, they overlap and are moving towards further convergence on increasing the cooperation among different European higher education systems (van der Wende, 2004).

### **2.1.5 Internationalisation Activities**

According to Knight (1997), it can be seen that internationalisation can be understood in two senses. First, it can be seen as an external pressure pressing onto higher education

institutions. Second, they are activities undertaken by HEIs in response to the external pressures. The term indicates not only changes of general trends and specific policies in the environment, but also institutional responses to them. Knight and De Wit define internationalisation as a “process which integrates an international dimension or perspective into the major functions of the organisation” (1995: 16-17). In other words, it means incorporating “a perspective, activity or programme which introduces or integrates an international/intercultural/global outlook” into the teaching, research and service functions of a university or college (Knight and De Wit, 1995:15).

When Knight and De Wit (1995) were studying the internationalisation strategies of Australia, Canada, the USA and Europe, they used the term “programme strategies” to characterize those academic activities and services taken by institutions which integrate such an international dimension into their main functions. In this research, the programmes strategies based on the 1995 study but further updated by Knight (2005) (Table 3 in Appendix 2) are used to characterize the internationalisation activities of HKU, which are assumed to be developed in the interplay between its changing contexts and core tasks. It should be noted that all these activities can be part of the internationalisation strategy of an institution; they are not exclusive to each other. In reality, not every institution can cover all or even most of these activities (Knight, 2005).

## **2.2 Organisation and the Environment**

Higher education institutions are not isolated institutions, but part of a wider network in society. Organisational choices and actions are conditioned by various external pressures and demands. Organisation must be responsive to survive. In analysing organisational change in internationalisation activities in higher education institution, this research makes use of the theoretical perspective of neo-institutionalism.

### **2.2.1 Neo-Institutional Theory**

Neo-institutional theory assumes that organisations operate in an environment dominated by rules, requirements, understanding and norms. It departs from the rationalistic explanation of organisational behavior and recognises the larger cultural and political contexts in which organisations are embedded in. In the neoclassical economic theory, human behavior is explained as maximizing behaviors engaged by an individual rational actor. In this perspective, actors construct institutions to deal with collective problems, which are primarily based on regulative frameworks. Actors respond to institutions because the regulations are backed by incentives and sanctions.

In addition to maximize efficiency, neo-institutional theory interprets organisations which take up new practices, embrace new strategies, structures and processes as their ways to react to and accommodate pressures from external scrutiny and regulation. Actors are still regarded as rational but their rationality is bounded. The theory holds an organist view on human behavior which is regarded as the product of interactions of norms, rules, beliefs and resources. As a result, social action is assumed to be grounded in social contexts which take into account the social rules and guidelines for behavior. Situational elements are important in the individual's decision-making process and form the basis of their "internal subjective reference of action" (Alexander 1983, 1:74). In this perspective, organisations are assumed to be influenced by institutional pressures from the external environment as well as demands internal to the organisation, which would both facilitate and constraint organisational behavior. The theory represents a shift of emphasis on the extent and type of rationality in explaining behavior (Scott, 2001).

## 2.2.2 The Three Pillars of an Institution

Although the institutional theory remains more of an orientation than a scientific theory (DiMaggio and Powell, 1991), Scott proposes there are three pillars (the regulative, normative and cultural-cognitive pillars) which constitute and support an institution. According to Scott, “institutions are multifaceted, durable social structures, made up of symbolic elements, social activities and material resources” (2001: 49). In this framework, each pillar operates through its own mechanisms and processes (Table 4). Even the distinction and boundary among them in reality is not very clear, they are the core elements which influence the way organisations operate.

**Table 4: The Three Pillars of an Institution**

	<b>Regulative Pillar</b>	<b>Normative Pillar</b>	<b>Cultural-cognitive Pillar</b>
<b>Basis of compliance</b>	- Expedience	- Social obligation	- Taken-for-grantedness - Shared understanding
<b>Basis of order</b>	- Regulative rules	- Binding expectations	- Constitutive schema
<b>Mechanism</b>	- Coercive	- Normative	- Mimetic
<b>Logic</b>	- Instrumentality	- Appropriateness	- Orthodoxy
<b>Indicators</b>	- Rules - Laws - Sanctions	- Certification - Accreditation	- Common beliefs - Shared logics of action
<b>Basis of legitimacy</b>	- Legally sanctioned	- Morally governed	- Comprehensible - Recognisable - Culturally supported

Source: Scott (2001:52).

### 2.2.2.1 The Regulative Pillar

The regulative pillar includes laws, rules and sanctions of institutions. Under this pillar, institutions have the capacity to establish rules, inspect actors’ conformity to them

and manipulate sanctions to influence the future behaviours of actors. These regulative processes of rule-setting, monitoring and sanctioning can be done through both formal channels (such as the police and the court) and informal mechanism (such as folkways). The primary mechanism of control is coercion and the state is always involved as a third-party enforcement agent (DiMaggio and Powell, 1991). In this pillar, rulers try to cultivate a belief in their legitimacy by imposing their will through threat or sanction. Institutions are thought to be legitimate because they are legally sanctioned, and actors comply with the regulations as a result of expedience. In higher education, the regulative pillars refer to the rules, regulations and policies set by the state in governing higher education (Scott, 2001). They lay out the steering model between the state and higher education institutions in a country, the extent of institutional autonomy higher education institutions can enjoy, the government's funding arrangement and quality assurance measures.

#### **2.2.2.2 The Cultural-cognitive Pillar**

The cultural-cognitive pillar is “the shared conceptions that constitute the nature of social reality and the frames through which meaning is made” (Scott, 2001:57). This pillar stresses the common framework of meaning constructed socially and internalised by actors. They are the symbolic representation of the world which mediate between the external world of stimuli and the response of the individual organism (Scott, 2001). In higher education, the cultural-cognitive pillar includes the “education and research model” of university education (Luijten-Lub, 2007), the dominant policy paradigm of a country, or the shared understanding and perception within an academic discipline. According to Clark (1983), academic discipline has its own culture, beliefs and definition of academic work. It perceives and responds to changes as guided by its definitions of what activity is legitimate

and its interpretation of the effects on its work, identity and tradition. Therefore, discipline is the primary frame of reference for academics to filter external changes and demands.

### **2.2.2.3 The Normative Pillar**

In this pillar, “normative rules introduce a prescriptive, evaluative and obligatory dimension into social life” (Scott, 2001: 54). They encompass both values and norms. Values are the desirable goals and objectives, or standards to which existing structures and behavior can be compared and assessed with. Norms are the legitimate means to pursue the valued ends. According to this pillar, institutions rest on a moral basis for legitimacy. When certain normative expectations for particular individuals or particular social positions exist, roles arise. They are prescriptions of how the specified actors are supposed to behave. More than external pressures, actors may also internalize them to certain extent. In higher education, the main values and norms refer to the academic freedom, the quality of education, and the formal and informal institutional hierarchies, such as the stratification of different types of higher education institutions (Scott, 2001). These norms and values guide the behavior of higher education institutions and prescribe what is appropriate for them. They are usually derived from tradition.

### **2.2.3 Organisational Change and Legitimacy**

Neo institutionalism and the three pillars of an institution justify the changes in an organisation. From the institutional point of view, an organisation changes and responds not just for resources and customers, but also for political power, institutional legitimacy, social as well as economic fitness. According to Meyer and Scott (1983:201), “organisational legitimacy refers to the degree of cultural support for an organisation”. To be legitimate, an organisation needs the support of various types of authorities to confer

them cultural and moral legitimacy, in addition to the legal one. Organisational conformity to institutional environments has survival value. Under the three pillars of an institution, the regulatory pillar emphasizes on conformity to rules. Legitimate organisations are those established by and operate in accordance with relevant legal or quasi-legal requirements. It suggests that organisational change is derived from the legitimation of management practices in response to influential external institutions, such as the state (Scott, 2001). To legitimize itself and to gain society's continued support, an organisation adopts certain policies and procedures to exhibit conformity (DiMaggio and Powell, 1991).

From the normative point of view, a deeper moral base for assessing legitimacy is stressed. Normative controls are more likely to be internalized, and incentives for conformity include both intrinsic and extrinsic rewards. Therefore, an organisation changes when there is a normative match between the values and beliefs underlying a proposed policy and the identity, values, norms and traditions of the organisation. Finally, legitimacy in the eyes of cultural-cognitive theorists comes from adopting a common frame of reference or definition of the situation. It is the deepest level which rests on preconscious, take-for granted understandings (Scott, 2001). In some occasions, in order to maintain organisational stability, an organization even constructs symbols of compliance to environmental change and result in ritualistic conformity (DiMaggio and Powell, 1991, Gornitzka, 1999).

#### **2.2.4 Isomorphism – Mechanism of Change toward Homogenisation**

An interesting point about studying institutions in institutional theory is to look for forces which make organisations in the same field converge in similar ways, i.e. change towards being homogenous. An organisational field refers to those organisations that, in the aggregate, constitute a recognised area of institutional life, as a result of coercive,

mimetic and normative isomorphisms. Homogenisation of organisational forms emerges out of structuration (Giddens, 1979), which is supposed to consist of four parts: an increase in interaction among organisations in the field, emergence of sharply defined inter-organisational structures of domination and patterns of coalition, an increase in the information load with which organisations in a field must contend, and development of a mutual awareness among participants of organisations in the same field. The definition points out the importance of connectedness and structural equivalence (DiMaggio and Powell, 1991) in the process of homogenisation and convergence of organisational forms. By acting as an information network, a field fuels the practices of standardization and professionalisation among its organisations. Moreover, highly structured organisational fields provide a context in which individuals can deal rationally with uncertainty and constraint, resulting in homogeneity of structure, culture and output. DiMaggio and Powell (1991) suggested that there are three forces driving the institutionalisation and homogenisation of organisational operations or practices. They are the coercive, mimetic and normative isomorphisms.

#### **2.2.4.1 Coercive Isomorphism**

Coercive isomorphism is the result of political influence and need for legitimacy. It stems from both formal and informal pressure imposed by another party upon which the organisation depends on, and the expectations of society within which it operates. Today, as rational states and other large rational organisations expand their dominance over more areas of social life, organisational structures increasingly come to reflect the rules which are institutionalised and legitimated by and within the state (Sharma and Lawrence, 2005). By setting a common legal environment and the legal and technical requirements of organisations, the state shapes organisations in similar ways and turns them to become

increasingly homogenous.

#### **2.2.4.2 Mimetic Isomorphism**

Mimetic isomorphism can be regarded as imitations among organisations. When faced with uncertainty, poor organisational technologies or ambiguous goals, organisations may model themselves on similar organisations in their field that they perceive to be more legitimate or successful. It yields a viable and economic solution for the organisations which are encountering change and help them to demonstrate to the public that they are trying to improve their working conditions. It is a cost-effective way of getting legitimacy (Sharma and Lawrence, 2005). Normally, models in a field are diffused in two ways, either unintentionally and indirectly through employee transfer or turnover, or explicitly through organisations such as consulting firms or industry trade associations.

#### **2.2.4.3 Normative Isomorphism**

Normative isomorphism stems from professionalisation. When professionals define their conditions and methods of practice, normative pressures arise from within a profession. Professionalisation drives isomorphism through the formal education received by the professionals in university, and professional networks which span across different organisations. By filling in individuals with similar educational background, orientation and disposition across a range of organisations (Perrow, 1974, cited in DiMaggio and Powell, 1991), similar management models and practices can diffuse easily and rapidly, making organisations more similar in nature. It is also true that when some large and leading firms become the pivotal models of policies and organisational structure in their fields (DiMaggio and Powell, 1991).

These mechanisms of isomorphism focus on both external (macro) and internal

(micro) organisational context of change. Coercive isomorphism is linked to the environment surrounding the organisational field; whereas the mimetic and normative processes are internal to the field and help to spread the roles and structures. Though they overlap and intermingle, they derive from different conditions and lead to different outcomes. The relations between the three pillars of institutions can be matched with the three isomorphic mechanisms (Table 5).

**Table 5: Pillars of Institutions and Isomorphic Mechanisms**

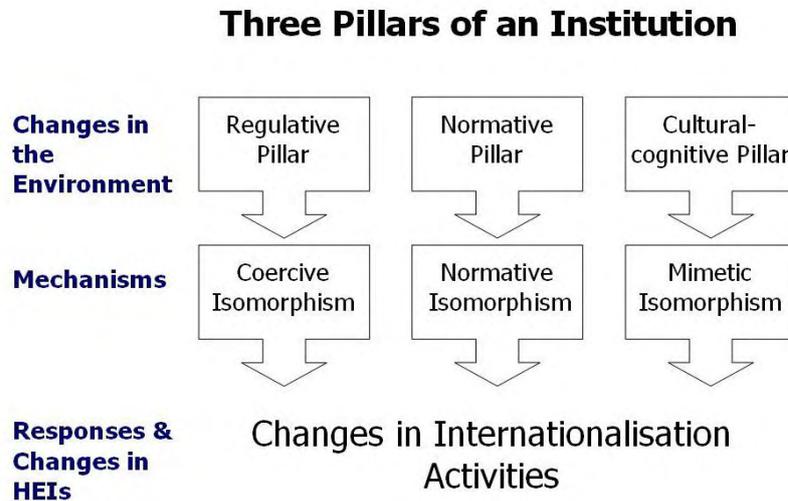
<b>Pillars of Institutions</b>	<b>Isomorphic Mechanisms</b>
Regulative pillars	Coercive isomorphism
Normative pillars	Normative isomorphism
Cultural-cognitive pillars	Mimetic isomorphism

Source: Scott (2001) and DiMaggio and Powell (1991).

### **2.2.5 Theoretical Framework and Expectation of the Research**

This study aims to investigate the dynamic interaction between the changing environment and the ways which HEIs handle changes. It is the basic assumption in institutional theory that environment influences organisations, and organisations, being influenced by the changing environment, can respond to the changes. In this study, the process of internationalisation in higher education can be regarded both as a process of organisational change and organisational response to the changes in the environment. It is assumed that the impact of internationalisation may lead to changes in the institutional elements (the regulative, normative and cultural-cognitive pillars) of the higher education institutions and thus exert influences onto them. By examining the case of HKU, this study is expected to answer what, how and why internationalisation is happening in higher education institutions. The overall theoretic framework is visualized in Diagram 1.

**Diagram 1: Theoretical Framework for Understanding Changes in the Internationalisation Activities of An Higher Education Institution**



In this study, we start with the basic assumption that changes in the extent, nature and scope of internationalisation activities in HKU are the result of changes in the three pillars. The research first reviews and analyses the government policy to demonstrate the extent to which the coercive force of the regulative pillar is influencing internationalisation in HKU. Then interviews with institutional actors are conducted to show that normative and cultural-cognitive pillars may also be critical and exert pressures on the University to change through normative and mimetic isomorphisms. It is believed that the aim of all these changes is to secure legitimacy and consolidate the international position of the University in the international arena. By analysing such changes, it is expected to unravel the process and underlying mechanisms of change in internationalisation.

## **Chapter 3: Research Methodology**

Conducting research involves a lot of choices. From the selection of topic, research approach, to data collection and analysing techniques, all require deliberate effort and consideration so as to keep the anticipated process under control. According to Blaikie (2000), methods and techniques (how) to answer the research questions is a natural outflow from the subject matter or problem being studied (what), and the purpose of research (why) being determined earlier. The whole research design is not isolated linear steps but spiral and cyclical in nature, in which the choices and steps are interrelated. This research is an original study set in the context of higher education to study about organisational changes and the underlying mechanisms. In order to examine the process of internationalisation in response to globalisation and internationalisation trend, it adopts a qualitative research approach and uses a case study. According to Kvale, the focus on one single case makes it possible to investigate in detail the relationship of a special behaviour to its context, as well as to work out the logic of the relationship between the individual and the situation (1996: 103). By focusing on one university (HKU), it is hoped to reveal the extent of changes in its internationalisation activities and tap the institutional actors' perception on the underlying mechanisms that stimulate such changes. By putting the findings against the postulates of the institutional theory on organisational change, the case serves both explorative and hypothesis testing functions.

### **3.1 Selection of the Case**

Use of single cases in qualitative research is vivid and illuminating, especially if the chosen cases are “critical”, extreme or unique, and “revelatory” (Yin, 1984, cited in Miles and Huberman, 1994). There are three reasons why HKU is selected for this case study. First, the University is “revelatory”. It has a clear motive and demonstrates concrete effort

in cultivating internationalisation. It has a strong identity as an international institution since its establishment in the early 1910s when it already admitted students from around the region and further away (HKU, 2006b). More recently, the University re-emphasizes on fostering internationalisation as one of the elements of its strategic development (HKU, 2003). In fact, internationalisation effort of the University has been recognised internationally. According to the “Times Higher Education - QS World University Rankings”, HKU was ranked within the top 50 universities in the world in the past few years and the first in Asia in 2009. One of the components of this ranking is “international factors” (comprises of indicators on “international students” and “international faculty”), which the University has done very well on it. The Times Higher Education Ranking stated that: “The University recruits excellent academic staff locally and internationally, and about 45% of academic staff are drawn from overseas, mostly from leading universities in the United Kingdom, North America, Australia, and a number of Asian countries. It also attracts outstanding students from all over the world, with around 10% international students from more than 40 countries.” (Times Higher Education, 2008).

Second, the University is unique in the sense that it is a western-model planted on the eastern soil. With nearly 100 years of history, HKU has now developed into a dynamic, comprehensive and internationally recognized university as most of its western counterparts. In one sense, as a westernised university, it serves well as a representative case for studying the process and mechanism of internationalisation in higher education institution. In another sense, with its location in Asia and the East, it would test the validity of the institutional theory in a different geo-political and cultural context. This research would reveal the extent to which the proposed mechanisms are “workable” universally. Lastly, though internationalisation has become an unresisting force in higher education and

an on-going phenomenon in Hong Kong's higher education sector, in-depth and concrete indigenous studies into the phenomena at institutional level is lacking. By focusing on a local university in Hong Kong, the research helps to build up the pool of empirical studies for Hong Kong, and provides a reference point for other higher education institutions in Asia which are on the way of internationalisation.

### **3.2 Data Collection Methods**

This research employs a three-staged multiple data-collection method, with the aim to generate both primary and secondary data for analyses. The first stage involves making reviews and analyses on government policies concerning the internationalisation of higher education sector in Hong Kong. The second stage is the review of HKU's policy documents. In the last stage, interviews with key actors and top administrators of HKU are conducted to unravel their views, opinions, and explanation of the mechanisms underlying internationalisation. Altogether, these three data collection methods are combined to ensure the generation of rich and complementary information.

#### **3.2.1 Document Reviews and Policy Analyses**

The first stage of review focuses on government documents, which include reports of the University Grants Committee (UGC), policy addresses of the Chief Executive of HKSAR, year books and annual budgets of Hong Kong Government, and policy papers of the Legislative Council of Hong Kong. This stage aims to examine the context of internationalisation in Hong Kong's higher education system and the extent of government influence on the University's internationalisation activities. The second stage of review focuses on the University, and the materials utilized include annual reports (The Review), mission statements, strategic plans (the Strategic Development Plan 2003-08), statistics

(Quick Stats), and publications (e.g. Introducing HKU) of the University. It is designed to depict the internationalisation activities of HKU.

### **3.2.2 Interviews**

“The qualitative research interview is a construction site of knowledge.” (Kvale, 1996:2). Through “inter-change of views”, or conversation, between two partners on a theme of mutual interest, interview is a process of knowledge discovery and creation. Its purpose is to obtain qualitative descriptions and interpretations of themes in the subjects’ lived world. When applying in case studies, interview can develop knowledge about one specific institution (Kvale, 1996). In this study, it is expected to explore and “dig out” the reasons and mechanisms of internationalisation in HKU. With this aim in mind, interview is a good means which allows informants to provide a “thick description” of the phenomena in the course of a genuine human exchange. It allows openness and flexibility in informants while answering. Such spontaneity can illicit rich and detailed materials, and provide insight into the topic area. As a result, an in-depth understanding on the research topic is able to be reached. Interview is also a kind of craftsmanship, which includes a shift from methods to the researcher (Kvale, 1996: 105). In interview, “the researcher as a person” is the main measuring instrument for obtaining knowledge. In this study, interviews with institutional actors can provide an opportunity for the researcher to experience the process of doing fieldwork. Lastly, interviews also help to triangulate the findings in the first and second stage of policy and document analyses.

#### **3.2.2.1 Design of the Interviews**

This study employs semi-structured interviews as the main data collection tool. Before the interview, an interview guide (Appendix 1) containing a list of suggested

questions was produced in relation to the research theme. There are a total of twelve questions, spreading evenly into three areas: general questions, specific questions and personal questions. General questions ask about the main internationalisation activities in the University, the reasons for such activities, the trend and the perceived changes. Specific questions aim to investigate into the mechanisms which underlie the internationalisation process, and more specifically, the role played by government policy, norms, values, traditions, and the influences of other higher education institutions. Finally, personal questions tap the views, reasons of engagement, effort of enhancing the internationalisation process, as well as the background of interviewees. The design of the interview guide was subjected to comments and approval by a third person, the researcher's supervisor, before interviews were carried out. While interviews can be ensured to remain in focus according to the pre-set questions, the flexibility to change the sequences and forms of question in semi-structured interviews allows the researcher to follow up the answers given by the interviewees immediately and ask for clarification on vague responses when needed.

### **3.2.2.2 The Sample**

According to Blaikie (2000), purposive sampling means selecting some cases of a particular type which are rich in information in respect to the purpose of the study. In this study, as bounded by the availability of time and resources, and relevance to the research purpose, studying the whole population was impossible and unnecessary. Only those people who were judged to be the key actors of internationalisation in HKU were drawn into the sampling frame. Therefore, the study uses a non-probability purposive sampling method. In the beginning, the Vice-Chancellor and three Pro Vice-Chancellors, who are responsible for overall policy and development direction of the University, were contacted and invited for interviews via emails. But all of them rejected to participate due to different

reasons and three of them referred the researcher to other persons whom are regarded as more directly and specifically involved in the internationalisation activities of the University. At last, a total of six interviewees were secured for the research. They are four senior management staff (two Senior Advisors to the Vice-Chancellor, one Dean and one Associate Dean) and two senior administrative staff (Dean of Student Affairs, and Director of Academic Liaison Section of the Registry). Given their positions and scope of duties, it is believed that these interviewees are able to give rich information on the internationalisation process and activities of HKU. Some basic characteristics of the interviewees are summarized in Table 6.

**Table 6: Characteristics of the Interviewees**

<b>Interviewees</b>	<b>Sex</b>	<b>Age</b>
A	M	Around 60
B	F	40+
C	M	Around 60
D	M	40+
E	M	50+
F	M	Around 50

Source: From fieldwork interviews by the researcher.

Though the sample size in this research is small, making statistical representativeness impossible, it is believed that the interviewees constitute a sociologically representative sample and would “bring a case to life” through their thick description in the interviewing process. In fact, Miles and Huberman (1994) argued that “the most useful generalizations from qualitative studies are analytic, not “sample-to-population” (28).

### **3.2.2.3 The Process of Interviews**

In late February, 2009, the researcher went to Hong Kong for the field research for two weeks. Before the interviews, invitation emails explaining the purpose of the study

were sent to the targeted sample to invite them to participate in the study. In the emails, their involvements were promised to be kept confidential and anonymous. If target samples agreed to participate, follow-up emails or phone calls were made to fix the date and time. All the interviews were carried during late February to early March of 2009. Each interview lasted approximately 30 minutes to one-and-a-half hour in duration and took place in the offices or meeting rooms of the interviewees. The large range of interview duration was accounted by the availability of time of the interviewees. Short interviews were usually because the interviewees were busy and had limited time available. Long interviews were mostly due to the time spent on building up rapport and the rich content that the interviewees were able to reveal. Regarding the language, half of the interviews were conducted in the local dialect of Cantonese (with informants A, C and E) and half in English (with informants B, D and F).

Every interview started with obtaining the informed consent of the interviewees on being interviewed and tape-recorded, followed by an introduction of the overall purpose of the research. Interviewees were also reassured again that the interviews would be treated confidentially. To ensure the quality of the interviews, questions were short and were asked in an open-ended manner to help interviewees respond in their own ways and express themselves fully. Besides tape-recording, the researcher also took back-up notes. As the main research instrument, the researcher kept active and sensitive throughout all interviews. While listening, the researcher tried to sense the immediate meaning of the answers given and the possible meanings they revealed and opened up. Expressions, such as nodding, utterance of “aha”, “um”, etc., were used as reflections and confirmative responses to interviewees. Whenever felt needed and appropriate, clarifications on the meanings of unclear answers were asked, and follow-up questions were made. This helped verify the

interpretation of the interviewees' answers in the course of interview. Interviews were rounded up by stating that "I have no further questions." and asking the interviewees if he or she has anything to bring up or add. The tapes were transcribed immediately after every interview. When transcribing the Cantonese interviews into English, special care was taken to ensure the essence of the answers is preserved and revealed. Both back-up notes and transcripts form the main data sources for further analyses. They also serve as an audit trail to enhance readers' creditability and confidence in the research findings.

### **3.3 Data Reduction and Analysis**

Data reduction refers to the transformation of raw data into a form which can be analysed and used for drawing final conclusions. According to Blaikie (2000), the processes of data reduction and analysis in qualitative research are integrated with data collection into a continuous and evolving process of theory construction. In this study, data gathered from the three sources of government policy, university's documents and interviews were condensed, reduced and analysed continuously in accordance with the theoretical framework and research questions. In processing the documents and policies, the main steps include the selection of relevant information, summary of main points, and noting for patterns and themes. To assist the analyses, different types of data and causal displays, such as statistical tables (e.g. Tables 8 and 9), thematic conceptual matrix (e.g. Tables 12 and 13), and causal networks (e.g. Diagrams 3 and 5) are constructed to show the patterns, changes and relationships between different parts of findings.

Concerning the interviews, the researcher first read the transcripts for patterns and categories in accordance with the research questions. After categorisation, regularly appeared phases were noted and coded to form themes. From these evolving themes, suggested variables were deducted to form some checklist matrix (e.g. Tables 19 and 20),

conceptually clustered matrix (e.g. Table 17) and thematic conceptual matrix (e.g. Table 18). From these matrixes and continuous reference back to the coded notes, causal networks are made to map out the interaction of the components of the three pillars (e.g. Diagrams 3, 5 and 7), as well as to display the relationships between these pillars and the internationalisation strategies, activities and changes in HKU (e.g. Diagrams 4, 6 and 8). Finally, an overall causal network (Diagram 9) linking all the previous findings on the University's strategies, changes of internationalisation, as well as components and interactions of different pillars is constructed to facilitate the final analysis and drawing up of conclusions.

### **3.4 Reliability and Validity**

The quality of any research depends on its reliability and validity. Reliability refers to the consistence of the research process over time, place, researcher and method. Validity can refer to two kinds of operations: 1) if the findings measure what they intend to measure (internal validity), and 2) if the findings can be generalised to other situations (external validity) (Miles and Huberman, 1994). In this study, special measures and attentions have been paid to ensure the research quality in two ways. First, the overall research approach, data gathering, data reduction and data analysis processes are described in a very detailed and explicit way. Such descriptions increase the transparence of the research process, and enable readers to see how the researcher arrives at the conclusion step-by-step. This clear audit trail also helps to increase the trustworthiness and creditability of the results, as well as the replicability or external validity of the research. Second, in this research, triangulation from different data sources (institutional actors in different positions), data types (both qualitative text and quantitative figures) and methods (interviews, document and policy reviews) are used to enable data to be cross-referenced and supplement each

other. This can check for “researcher effect” and increase the credibility and internal validity of the research.

### **3.5 Summary**

In sum, this study is a deductive-inductive qualitative research. After literature review of major concepts and theories, deductive reasoning was used to formulate some expected findings from the institutional theory. Then, the researcher worked back and forth on the documents, policies and interview data. During the process, the logic of analytic induction was used to link up different clues and variables, and establish their causal relationships. The researcher worked step-by-step from “what” and “how” to “why”, and from the theory (to work out expectations of findings), to data (to gather evidence to support or validate those expectations) and back to the theory (for interpretation of findings). The final aim is to explore the perception of interviewees on the reason, rationales and means which underlie internationalisation, and gain an understanding of the mechanisms which guide the university to respond to changes in the environment. Throughout the study, the researcher remains the primary data collection, analysis and interpretation instrument.

#### **Chapter 4: Internationalisation Activities and Changes in HKU**

Findings of the research will be presented in two chapters. In this chapter, the focus is on “what” and “how”. It depicts the main internationalisation activities and strategies of HKU, as well as the changes of such activities in recent years. In the next chapter, the focus will be on “why”. It will reveal and discuss the mechanisms which underlie such changes with reference to the three pillars (the regulative, the normative and the cultural-cognitive pillars) of the institutional theory described in chapter two.

Before going deep into the internationalisation activities and changes at HKU, the period of observed change in this study needs to be clarified. This research only focuses on changes of HKU in recent few years, roughly since 2002. The setting of this time frame was due to two reasons. First, it is revealed by several interviewees that the activity level of internationalisation process at HKU revived around that time (2002). When talking about internationalisation in HKU, over half of the respondents mentioned about the internationalisation activities of the University at its early period. They all said that HKU was very international in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. However, because of the political circumstances in China in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, Hong Kong became isolated and internationalisation activities started to decline. In the last six to seven years, such scenario has changed and internationalisation at HKU revives as the University becomes active in recruiting international students from around the world again. The second reason is the lack of data from the previous period, which may partly be the result of poor recording or more likely the fact that international activities were quite limited in scope and quantity before.

To depict the recent picture of internationalisation at HKU, this chapter starts by presenting the University’s strategic plan on internationalisation, followed by the findings

from the fieldwork. The internationalisation activities and changes of HKU tapped through interviews with institutional actors are categorized according to the programme strategies suggested by Knight (2005) and Knight & de Wit, (1995). In general, HKU's internationalisation activities are found to focus on three main aspects: "academic programmes", "domestic and cross-border activities" and "extra-curricular activities". Moreover, respondents reported that there are noticeable quantitative and qualitative changes in these activities in recent years.

#### **4.1 Strategic Plan on Internationalisation**

When browsing through the University's website, it is founded out that HKU has a clear strategic plan for its internationalisation activities. On its website (HKU, 2009e), the University states its vision in these terms:

"The University of Hong Kong, as *a pre-eminent international university in Asia*, seeks to sustain and enhance its excellence as an institution of higher learning through outstanding teaching and world-class research so as to produce well-rounded graduates with lifelong abilities to provide leadership within the societies they serve."<sup>2</sup>

In order to fulfill this aspiration as an international university in Asia, the University announced its first most comprehensive five-year strategic development plan in 2003, putting a focus of its activities on four strategic areas: 1) enhancing academic excellence; 2) raising global presence and visibility; 3) partnering with society and serving the community; and 4) developing and supporting "The University Family". In the plan, "fostering internationalisation" is one of the ten proclaimed means announced to help the University achieve the highest possible standard in these four areas. In operational terms,

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<sup>2</sup> Italic by the researcher.

this means recognising and implementing the best international practices where appropriate; reviewing and strengthening international networks and regional alliances to facilitate student movement, faculty development and exchange programmes; recruiting international students; and strengthening the international element of the curriculum to enhance global understanding and cross-cultural awareness amongst local students (HKU, 2003). By adopting such strategies, the University wishes to raise its global presence and visibility, and attain international recognition as a premier international university.

## **4.2 Perceived Internationalisation Activities and Changes by Institutional Actors**

According to the institutional actors, the main internationalisation strategies in HKU mainly fall into the categories of “academic programmes”, “domestic and cross-border activities” and “extra-curricular activities”. Details will then be presented below.

### **4.2.1 Academic Programmes**

In terms of the international dimensions in academic programmes, the main foci of HKU are on the recruitment of “international students”, “student exchange programmes”, “internationalised curricula”, “cross-cultural training” and “work/study abroad”, plus some emphases on “joint/double degree programmes”, “area or thematic studies” and “foreign language study” (Table 7 in Appendix 2).

#### **4.2.1.1 Recruitment of International Students**

During the interviews, when asked about the main internationalisation activities of the University, “recruitment of international students” was named by all the respondents. For example, in 2007/08, HKU admitted 1,051 international students to full-time postgraduate and 888 students to undergraduate programmes from 44 different countries (Table 8). The University believes that such diversity is a source of creative intellectual and cultural

interaction, and one of its great assets (HKU, 2008b). By bringing in more non-local students, they will help the “Internationalisation at Home/in Campus” at HKU (Informants B and C). Therefore, the University has recently decided to increase the percentage of non-local students from 10% to 20% of the total student population (HKU, 2008a).

**Table 8: Non-local Students Enrolled in Regular UGC-funded Programmes**

	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
<b>Mainland China</b>				
Undergraduate	215	400	615	804
Taught Postgraduate	25	21	19	17
Research Postgraduate	608	716	825	916
<b>Subtotal (% to Total Non-local Student Headcount)</b>	<b>848 (82.3%)</b>	<b>1,137 (85.6%)</b>	<b>1,459 (88.4%)</b>	<b>1,737 (89.6%)</b>
<b>Other Countries</b>				
Undergraduate	22	35	59	84
Taught Postgraduate	51	42	28	23
Research Postgraduate	109	114	104	95
<b>Subtotal (% to Total Non-local Student Headcount)</b>	<b>182 (17.7%)</b>	<b>191 (14.4%)</b>	<b>191 (11.6%)</b>	<b>202 (10.4%)</b>
<b>Number of Countries</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>Total (% to Total Full-time Headcount)</b>	<b>1,030 (9.2%)</b>	<b>1,328 (11.5%)</b>	<b>1,650 (14.7%)</b>	<b>1,939 (15.6%)</b>

Source: Quick Stats, HKU.

Respondents also confirmed that there are both quantitative and qualitative changes in this non-local student composition. Half of the respondents mentioned they witnessed an increase in the number and half reported seeing a more mix of ethnicity in non-local student composition. Such perceived changes are supported by statistical figures. Table 8 shows that the number of non-local full-time students increased substantially (91%) in four year times, from 1,030 in 2004/05 to 1,939 in 2007/08. Informant C explained such increase was related to two start-off intakes of non-local students. In 2002, the University started to recruit Mainland students by launching the “Admission of Undergraduate

Students from the Mainland Scheme”. In more recent years, HKU stretched the international student recruitment further beyond Asia to different countries around the world. At present, the University has international students from over 40 different countries (Table 8). In addition to Eastern Europe and Africa, the University is now looking very seriously at countries such as India and Pakistan, because they represent one of the largest markets of student recruitment in the world (Informant C).

#### **4.2.1.2 Student Exchange**

Another internationalisation strategy that is reported by all respondents is “student exchange”. At present, the University has an institutional wide programme on student exchange, called “HKU Worldwide Undergraduate Exchange Programme”. In 2007/08, HKU received 752 exchange students and sent out 775 students abroad (Table 9). For incoming exchange students, increases in number and diversity of country of origin are observed by respondents and supported by statistics. Table 9 shows the number of incoming students increased from 482 in 2004/05 to 752 in 2007/08 (an increase of 56% in four years). By bring in more exchange students and non-local students (section 4.2.1.1), the University now has a very international student body (nearly 3,000) in campus, which makes up about 15% of the total student population.

Concerning outgoing student exchange, informants reported that there is an increase in number and changes in students’ country choices. Informant F said that “when students chose the countries in the past, most of them preferred going to English speaking countries, such as the UK, USA, Canada and Australia. But, now, more and more students are willing to go to those developing countries in the South-East Asia, Africa and Europe, which they are less familiar with”. The researcher was also told that the University is now determined to achieve the target of sending 100% undergraduate students out for non-local experiences

before 2012. This new policy is expected to provide every student a chance to work or study outside Hong Kong for a semester or a year during their undergraduate degree.

**Table 9: Exchange Students under UGC-funded Undergraduate Programmes**

	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
<b>Incoming students</b>				
<b>HKU Worldwide Undergraduate Exchange Programme (semester/full-year based)</b>				
N. America Countries (Canada, USA)	163	190	215	253
European Countries (Austria, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, UK)	76	109	156	158
Asian Countries (Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Singapore)	36	43	83	77
Australia and New Zealand	34	38	50	57
<b>Other Exchange Programmes (semester/summer based)</b>				
Mainland China	173	200	207	159
Other Countries	0	31	25	48
<b>Total</b> (% of the total undergraduate student body)	<b>482</b> (5.4%)	<b>611</b> (6.6%)	<b>738</b> (7.6%)	<b>752</b> (7.5%)
<b>Outgoing students</b>				
<b>HKU Worldwide Undergraduate Exchange Programme (semester/full-year based)</b>				
N. America Countries (Canada, USA)	119	120	156	183
European Countries (Austria, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, UK)	62	87	109	159
Asian Countries (Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Singapore)	39	59	62	49
Australia and New Zealand	43	35	37	42
<b>Other Exchange Programmes (semester/summer based)</b>				
Mainland China	332	271	212	107
Other Countries	299	200	198	235
<b>Total</b> (% of the total undergraduate student body)	<b>894</b> (10.0%)	<b>772</b> (8.4%)	<b>773</b> (8.0%)	<b>775</b> (7.8%)

Source: Quick Stats, HKU.

#### 4.2.1.3 Internationalised Curricula, Cross-cultural Training and Work/Study Abroad

In addition to diversify the student population, HKU aims to provide an international dimension in its curriculum. In 2006-07, the University reached a consensus that its new

curriculum will incorporate internationalism in the student-centered learning approach (HKU, 2007b) and faculties are now undertaking reviews to strengthen their programmes towards this aim. As pointed out by Informant F, the University already plans to incorporate elements of intercultural understanding and the concept of global vision in the new four-year undergraduate curriculum in 2012 under the “334 Education Reform”<sup>3</sup>. Therefore, there are unanimous responses from all respondents that “internationalised curricula” is present in the internationalisation activities of HKU (Table 7 in Appendix 2).

Talking about “internationalised curricula”, the Faculty of Social Sciences is regarded as a pioneer and prime example by the majority of respondents in the interviews. It was the first faculty which requires all its undergraduates in the selected programmes to have out-of-Hong Kong experience through the “Global Citizenship Programme” since 2008 (HKU, 2008c). The Programme is part of the Faculty’s curriculum and graduation requirement counting twelve credits. Under the programme, students can gain out-of-Hong Kong experiences in one of the three legitimised means: going out for exchange; joining a summer school which is organised jointly by three different campuses in Taiwan, Mainland China and South Korea every summer; or taking up an internship out of the border in the Mainland China or overseas. Therefore, this programme also combines cross-cultural training and work/study abroad elements in Knight’s categorisation with the international dimensions of curriculum. It signals HKU is paying effort to pave the way for the new curriculum under the “334 Reform” in 2012.

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<sup>3</sup> In 2000, the government of Hong Kong decided to reform of the whole education system in Hong Kong. From 2012, secondary school in Hong Kong will be reduced from seven years of education to six years and bachelor degree will be extended from three to four years. This reform is always referred as “334 Reform” meaning there will be three years junior secondary education, three years senior secondary education plus four years university education after the reform. Further details of the reform will be explained in section 5.1.1 or available at website: <http://tl.hku.hk/node/10>.

#### **4.2.1.4 Other Academic Programmes which Contain an International Emphasis**

Besides the above, the research reveals that HKU put some international emphasis on its “joint/double degree programmes”, “area or thematic studies”, and “foreign language study”. Concerning the offering of “joint/double degree programmes” with other international partners, two informants quoted some concrete examples to substantiate this point. Informant A quoted the MBA programme jointly offered by HKU (HK), Columbia Business School (New York, USA) and London Business School (London, UK) through collaborative agreements with these two Universities in 2006 and 2007 under the “New-Lon-Kong” concept. Similarly, Informant E gave an example of a programme in one Faculty, which is jointly offered by three universities in three countries. Under the programme, selected students from the Keio University (Japan), Yonsei University (South Korea) and HKU (HK) go to all the three campuses to study together.

Other strategies for internationalisation under academic programmes occur in the “area or thematic studies” and “foreign language study”. The University now provides thematic studies in five areas: American Studies, European Studies, Japanese Studies, Modern China Studies, and African Studies. Since these programmes aim to offer students an interesting array of perspectives, they are also inter-disciplinary in nature by drawing in subject matters and teachers from a range of different disciplines, such as humanities, languages and cultures, business, fine arts, geography, history, music and sociology. In addition, the General Education Unit also offers programmes to increase students’ understanding about the Islamic world.

Similarly, the offerings of “foreign language study” can be counted as the main internationalisation activity in HKU. Informant F mentioned that more students today take up a third, fourth or fifth foreign language to learn and the University now offers

more different types of language courses, such as the Arabic which is important for understanding the Islamic world, for students. Further search on University's website by the researcher confirmed that there are twelve foreign languages available at HKU for students to choose as credit- or non-credit bearing units. They include Mandarin, Arabic, French, German, Greek, Italian, Japanese, Korean, Portuguese, Spanish, Swedish and Thai.<sup>4</sup>

#### **4.2.2 Domestic and Cross-Border Activities**

In terms of “domestic and cross-border activities”, the main foci of HKU are on “community service and intercultural project work” and “international linkages, partnerships and networks”, with some emphasis on “customized education & training programmes for international partners and clients”, “contract-based training and research programmes and services”, “cross-delivery of educational programmes” and “student clubs and associations” (Table 7 in Appendix 2). Findings on each of these categories are presented below.

The majority of interviewees replied that HKU is very active in “community service and intercultural project work”, especially those carried out by students. It is because “service learning” is regarded as one of the main educational philosophies of the University. For instance, Informant C mentioned that some students go to Cambodia to offer concern and help to the landmine victims there. Informant F said that twelve students were sent to Bali, Indonesia, as formal observers to attend the ministerial conference on global warming in 2007. The most vivid and illustrative example is the “MOEI

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<sup>4</sup> It should note here that English is not counted as a foreign language, as it is the official medium of instruction in the University.

Programme”<sup>5</sup> told by Informant E. Under the programme, local students work with students from the UK and the USA in the Thai-Burma border to deliver English classes to Burmese refugees. MOEI not only enables students to cooperate with people from different cultures and backgrounds, but also boosts the University’s external engagement with Burma, and promotes Burma’s advocacy. He concluded that “it is an experience of the world that students couldn’t possibly get in Hong Kong.”

The research also reveals that HKU has established more and better linkages with universities in other parts of the world in recent years. This change can be seen in three ways. First, the increased number of partners in student exchange as Informant B expressed: “What has changed in these 10 years is the number of partners we establish. Now, we have more different partners from Europe, US, UK, China and the South-East Asia”. For example, under the “HKU Worldwide Undergraduate Student Exchange Programme”, the University at present has 150 overseas university partners in twenty-five countries, including the USA, UK, Canada, Australia, Japan and Singapore, in offering two-way exchange opportunities for students. Second, the University is active in forming and joining international networks, such as the “Universitas 21” Consortium (the U21 Consortium) which is established by twenty-one leading research-intensive universities from thirteen countries in 1997. Objectives of the Consortium are to assist all the members to become global universities and to advance their plans for internationalisation (HKU, 2009c).

Third, other than those university-level partnerships, some international linkages and networks are formed at faculty level or on individual basis. Informant E mentioned the

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<sup>5</sup> Website: <http://www.hku.hk/socsc/moei/>.

collaboration one faculty formed with the University of New York and King's College of London on a five year research project. Informant C also said:

“My closer relationship is with the University of Nottingham...Actually I work a lot with its previous Vice-Chancellor, and we continue to work together in China, because he has a very strong influence in China.”

Other than serving the local community, HKU is very involved in the delivery of international services beyond the local community. It offers “customized education and training programmes”, as well as “contract-based training and research programmes and services for international partners and clients”. For example, Informant A said that the University was selected in 2004 as the official training centre for the World Trade Organisation (WTO) in the Asia-Pacific Region to offer regional trade policy courses for government officials from over 30 jurisdictions (HKU, 2009c).

Moreover, the review of University's publications and website depicted that two more aspects, “cross-delivery of educational programmes”, and “student clubs and associations”, can be added to the University's internationalisation activities and strategies according to Knight's categorisation. First, the University has been active in offering cross-border degree programmes in the Mainland. In 2007/08, there were seven outreach degree programmes in cities of Shanghai, Shenzhen and Beijing, among others, enrolled by more than 900 students (Table 10 in Appendix 2). The Faculty of Law also helps train judges in Mainland China (Informant A).

On the student side, among the 110 student societies and clubs under the Students' Union, a number of them are local branches of some international student associations, such as AIESEC, World Collegiate Association for the Research of Principles (World CARP), World University Service (WUS), and the Rotaract. Generally speaking, these

international students' associations and clubs provide a platform for HKU students to have contacts with students overseas through international conferences or joint community services projects. Besides these, there are a number of active student groups which serve as pioneers in raising awareness on global issues in campus and local community. They set up NGOs on their own, which include "Hong Kong Climate Change Coalition", "Fair Trade Voice", "Humanity In Focus" and "Hong Kong Alliance Against AIDS" (Informants A and F).

### **4.2.3 Extra-Curricular Activities**

This research finds out that "international and intercultural campus events", and "peer support groups and programmes" are parts of the means to enrich the international dimension of the University's extra-curricular activities for students. Most of the respondents indicated that student and campus activities at HKU "have naturally incorporated internationalisation elements". For example, the "Global Vision Programme" has a strong international emphasis by organizing a series of cross-cultural events, such as cultural dance festivals, international food tasting and talks by different Consul-Generals. Started two years ago, the programme focuses on one chosen country every semester and aims to "ensure students from different curriculum have understandings of the world around them, and not just Hong Kong" (Informant C). It is currently being launched for the 5<sup>th</sup> time and Japan is the country in focus (other themed countries in the past were Spain, India, France and South Africa). In addition, the University has different activities on campus which promote students' awareness on world issues, such as global warming, peace, fair trade and fighting against poverty (Informant F).

Though no respondents mentioned about the existence of any peer support groups and programmes in the University, a search on the University's website shows that the

University has a “Buddy Scheme” for incoming international students. All students returning from exchange studies are requested to participate in the buddy programme to offer general guidance to incoming exchange students during their stay in Hong Kong (HKU, 2009a).

#### **4.2.4 Research and Scholarly Collaboration**

From the interviews, it is interesting to discover that only a minority of interviewees explicitly mentioned international research activities or collaboration as the main international activities of the University, even though the University has claimed itself as a world-class comprehensive research university, with research activities and collaboration, both within HKU and with leading institutions in the Chinese Mainland and around the world. Cautions needed to be paid here when interpreting such responses and international research should not be regarded as absent in the University’s objectives. First, it is because, as said by Informant C: “Research works primarily bottom-up, with some top-down influences in terms of strategic partnership”. Since most research collaboration and international research projects are believed to be carried out at the basic units or departments, the overall picture of their existence is difficult to grab and thus report. Second, it may be due to the fact that most of the informants in this study are top-level administrators, who are more responsible for policy development and less directly involve in research. This point can be supported by taking a closer look of the interview transcripts, when two respondents, who are also part of academic staff, told the researcher about their ongoing international research work and collaboration. Informant A said:

“So my projects are basically international projects. Right now, for example, there is an on-going World Bank project I participated in Swaziland, a small country in Africa. I am following through a kind of reform on higher education in Indonesia, so I just came back from Jakarta yesterday. I am also participating in a national movement to

reform the higher education system in Pakistan. A similar project is coming up in Vietnam and another one in Africa.”

Similarly, Informant E told the researcher that his faculty “has launched a collaboration project with the University of New York and Kings’ College of London...And this is a five-year research collaboration project.”. Therefore, if a different sampling of informant was used (e.g. academic staff at faculty or department levels), conclusion on research and scholarly collaboration may become different. Through document reviews, it is in fact found out that HKU has many on-going research connections with institutions and universities around the world. One of the most notable international collaborative efforts is the HKU-Pasteur Research Centre, established in 1999. The Centre conducts joint research with the Institut Pasteur of Paris on battling infectious diseases. HKU also signed a memorandum of understanding with the Aaron Diamond AIDS Research Centre in New York to set up a twin research centre in 2002. The Centre plays an important role in treating and reducing the spread of HIV infection in Mainland China by investigating new therapies for HIV infection and developing AIDS vaccines (HKU, 2008a). At present, the University has ten joint research laboratories with China and other parts of the world (Table 11 in Appendix 2).

#### **4.2.5 Other Organisational Strategies**

Lastly, strategies on the recruitment of international academic staff, provision of supporting infrastructures for internationalisation, and change in the academic staff structure in departments are also worth-mentioning in the internationalisation process of HKU. Historically, HKU has a strong international composition of academic staff. It is one of the University’s internationalisation strategies to draw in expertise from all parts of the world. From the University’s website, it is claimed that about 45% of the academic staff

came from a wide range of countries, including the UK, North America, Australia and other Asian countries, in 2007 (HKU, 2009d). To be more concrete, the “Times Higher Education - QS World University Rankings 2008” statistics reveals that out of the total 2,224 academic staff in the University in 2008, 1,288 was counted as international. However, this figure takes the factor of citizenship into account and thus includes professors from Mainland China who are Chinese ethnics but do not hold Hong Kong citizenship (Times Higher Education, 2008). Furthermore, informant A told the researcher that, among the academic staff in the past 20 years, there is a drop from the UK and USA, but increase from other non-English speaking countries. In his Faculty, for example, there are now academic staffs from India, Serbia, Chile, Italy and South Africa.

A second area related to the internationalisation of HKU being mentioned by interviewees are the existence and availability of institution-wide services and support units for internationalisation. Both Informant A and E gave very positive comments on the performance of the Office of International Exchange (OISE) which is responsible for developing and enhancing international relations of HKU with overseas institutions, and administering the “HKU Worldwide Student Exchange Programme for Undergraduate Students”. Another distinguished feature of the University in promoting internationalisation on campus is the setting up of “Global Lounge” in 2005. With a wide range of facilities, including an outdoor cafe, a resource library with international newspapers, an information office, and some TVs broadcasting different news stations from around the world, the Lounge is designed as a social centre with an international character for students. In its opening ceremony, the Vice Chancellor, Professor Lap-Chee Tsui, remarked that: "The Global Lounge as an international centre for students is a symbol of our role as an education hub that provides support to all HKU students from around the

world.” (HKU, 2009b).

Besides the above changes in international strategies, one respondent (Informant A) reported about the change in professoriate structure and management concept of the University. He quoted the number of professors in the department as an example, saying that “in the past, there was only one chair professor in each department, but now you can have as many professors as you can”. He commented, “This is very American in the way” and the University has become “a hybrid of the UK and USA” and is no longer “a kind of British dominant university”. It shows that the University is incorporating organisational practices from more different places.

### **4.3 Summary**

From the above fieldwork findings, HKU is founded to cover one-third of the programme strategies on internationalisation put forward by Knight (2005). These activities concentrate mainly on the areas of “academic programmes”, “domestic and cross-border activities” and “extra-curricular activities”. As informants’ degree of agreement on the prevalence and significance of these international strategies varies, only the most obvious and agreed ones reported by over half of the interviewees (at least four) will be included in the subsequent analysis (Table 12). They are the increase in number and diversity of non-local students, increase in the number of outgoing exchange students and diversity in their country choices, enhanced international dimension in curricula with cross cultural training and work/study abroad element (academic programmes); increase in number and diversity of international linkages, partnerships and networks, increased number and diversity of community service and intercultural project work (domestic and cross-border activities); international and intercultural campus events (extra-curricular activities); and widened diversity of academic staff composition and change in the

professoriate structure (other organisational strategies). Once again, it is reminded that due to the time and resource constraint of the present research, findings on these internationalisation activities and changes of HKU are not conclusive and exhaustive. As Knight proclaimed, all these activities are only part of the internationalisation strategy of an institution, and it is unrealistic to think that HKU can cover all of them (Knight, 2005).

**Table 12: Categorisation of Strategies and Changes in Internationalisation Activities of HKU**

<b>Academic Programmes</b>	<b>Domestic and Cross-border Activities</b>	<b>Extra-curricular Activities</b>	<b>Other Organisational Strategies</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Increase in no. and diversity of non-local students</li> <li>2. Increase in no. of outgoing exchange students and diversity in country choices</li> <li>3. Increasing international dimension in curriculum</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Increase in no. &amp; diversity of international linkages, partnerships and networks</li> <li>2. Increase in no. and diversity of community service and international project works (mostly initiated by students)</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Increase in no. of international and intercultural campus events</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Increased diversity of academic staff composition</li> <li>2. Change in professoriate structure</li> </ol>

Source: Findings from the fieldwork being categorised according to the programme strategies of Knight (2005).

Moreover, in order to offer a clearer picture of the overall internationalisation process of HKU, the internationalisation strategies of HKU revealed from policy analysis in section 4.1 are matched with the empirical findings of some specific policies mentioned by the interviewees in section 4.2 to form Table 13 in Appendix 2. Under the theme of “fostering internationalisation”, strategies for international student recruitment include launching the “Admission of Undergraduate Students from the Mainland Scheme”,

extension of the Scheme to cover Mainland students who are not supported by scholarship, as well as the setting up of Global Lounge in 2005. To strengthen international networks and alliances for student movement, staff development and exchange programmes, the University launched the “HKU Worldwide Student Exchange Programme for Undergraduate Students” in 1998, “HKU Worldwide China Programme” in 2002 and set up the Global Lounge to serve as a meeting for local and non-local students. Moreover, the University agreed to incorporate internationalism in its 2012 new curriculum and already launched the “Global Citizenship Programme” in the Faculty of Social Sciences in 2008. These match with the University’s aspiration to enhance its global understanding and cross-cultural awareness among local students. Finally, the University has tried to increase the geographical diversity of academic staff and change the professoriate system. They can be interpreted as signs of adopting the best international practices for better organisational management and staff recruitment. More details about adopting the best international practices will be discussed in chapter five when we talk about benchmarking in HKU.

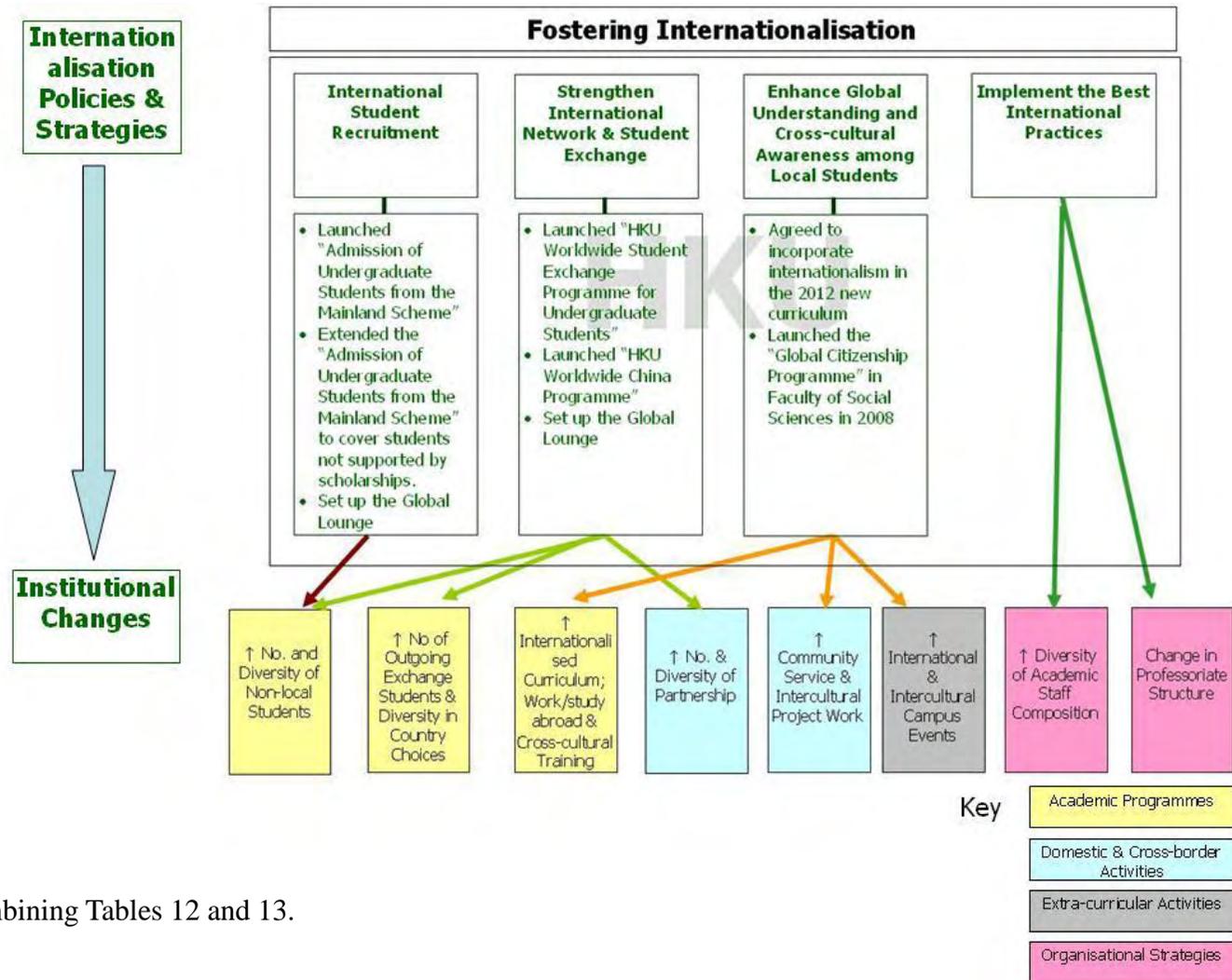
Finally, to assist further analysis in chapter five and reveal the association between internationalisation strategies and changes, another match of the above combined strategic plan and policies (Table 13) with the empirical findings on changes of internationalisation activities (Table 12) is made in Diagram 2. The diagram depicts that there is a rough match between the suggested operationalisation of “fostering Internationalisation” and its actual happenings. It can be seen that the emphasis on recruiting international students matches with the increases in number and diversity of non-local students in HKU. The increase in non-local students together with the rising number of student exchanges and the increase in number and diversity of international linkages and networks can be attributed to the enhanced effort of the University on strengthening its international networks and student

exchange. Moreover, the increasing international dimension in curriculum, increased number of community service and intercultural project work initiated and carried out by students, and more international and intercultural campus events can be associated with the enhancement of global understanding and cross-cultural awareness among local students. Finally, the call for recognising and implementing the best international practices may be the factor which foster the increased geographical diversity of academic staff and the change in the professoriate structure. This diagram matching between the University' policy and empirical findings on internationalisation activities and changes in HKU will form the basis for further analysis in the next chapter, when the influences of the three pillars of institutional theory on the internationalisation process of HKU are discussed.

#### **4.4 Analysis**

In this final part of the chapter, we will try to analyse and link all the above findings into coherent themes, which include “internationalisation at home” with focus on students, mainstreaming of internationalisation activities, institutionalisation of these activities and internationalisation versus “Chinalisation”.

Diagram 2: Strategic Plan, Policies, and Empirical Findings on Changes of Internationalisation Activities in HKU



Source: Combining Tables 12 and 13.

#### **4.4.1 “Internationalisation at Home” with Focus on Students**

In general, respondents admitted that recruitment of international students, student exchange programmes, and forming internationalisation linkages, partnerships and networks are the main internationalisation activities and strategies of the University. It is hoped that by bringing in different cultures and more international students, they can enable “internationalisation at home” in HKU. Besides increasing the recruitment of international students and sending out more students for exchanges, HKU also started to incorporate more international and global elements in both curriculum and extra-curriculum. Inside the curriculum, the concept of global vision will become a prime theme in the new curriculum in 2012. In fact, the Faculty of Social Sciences has already launched the “Global Citizenship Programme” as one of its graduation requirements. Outside the formal curriculum, a wide range of inter-cultural activities and international campus events are organised to enlarge the international horizon and outlook of students. Under the ethos of experiential learning, students are very encouraged to initiate and participate in cross-border community service and intercultural project works. All these show that internationalisation activities at HKU are very student-oriented and put a strong emphasis on the development and cultivation of an international vision among students.

#### **4.4.2 Mainstreaming of Internationalisation Activities**

In terms of international research and collaboration, though interviewees did not provide a very detailed picture on the current happenings, the use of other data sources, such as University’s website, statistics (Quick Stats) and annual reports (The Review), shows that international research activities and collaboration are emphasized in the internationalisation process of the University. Together with those strategies which aim at internationalisation at home mentioned in 4.4.1, it is shown that the emphasis of

internationalisation has become mainstreamed into the education provision and research activities of HKU. Another obvious indicator is the forming of the “U21 consortium” by HKU with other universities from different regions. Through the consortium, the University helps to bring the topic of internationalisation of higher education institutions to a supra level and put it into an activity of international concern. All in all, this research shows that internationalisation in HKU puts strong emphasis on enhancing the quality of education through cultural understanding and international elements (van de Wende, 2002).

#### **4.4.3 Institutionalisation of Internationalisation Activities**

It is also interesting to note that internationalisation activities at HKU are operating on a more institutionalised level. First, the University has formulated its foremost comprehensive strategic plan and policies to focus on “fostering internationalisation”. Second, it has been investing in different infrastructures to support the execution of internationalisation strategies. The Office of International Exchange was set up to seek and establish more partnerships with overseas universities, and administer the university-wide exchange programme, the “HKU Worldwide Student Exchange Programme for Undergraduate Students”. Lastly, the Global Lounge was established to provide a meeting point for local and non-local students, and symbolize the image of the University as an international education hub.

#### **4.4.4 Internationalisation Versus “Chinalisation”**

While the University is paying effort to internationalise itself, taking a closer look at some of its changes, it is revealed that there is a strong imbalance of “China” factor. For example, among the international students (Table 8), a high proportion of them comes from the Mainland China (around 90% in both full-time undergraduate and postgraduate

research programmes), especially since the University launched its “Admission of Undergraduate Students from the Mainland Scheme” in 2002. In 2008/09, the Scheme was further extended to cover students who are not supported by scholarships. As a result, 265 fee-paying mainland students were admitted from the 12,011 applicants in 2008 (HKU, 2009c). As Informant E commented, the non-local student composition in HKU now skews towards Mainland students, with the existing 10% quota mainly occupied by them. In reality, there is only 1-2% non-Chinese student taking up full-time undergraduate studies in the University. Similar to the targeted recruitment of Mainland students, a considerable proportion of students going out for exchange chose the Mainland China (about 37% in 2004/05, 35% in 2005/06, and 27% in 2006/07) (HKU, 2005; HKU, 2006a and HKU, 2007a). It is believed to be the result of the “HKU Worldwide China Programme” started by the University in 2002. Moreover, among the academic staff, there is a marked increase in Chinese from Taiwan and Mainland China in recent years. As a result of these changes, there provokes some concerns in the University’s community on this “Chinalisation” phenomena (Informant C). The University now has to struggle its way to balance between this “Chinalisation” and real internationalisation in the wider perspective. On the other hand, this “Chinalisation” can also be interpreted as a first step which the University internationalises itself. As China is increasingly catching the world’s attention in the global arena, building up close linkages with China would help the city and the University to attract international attention. Therefore, emphasizing exchanges with the motherland and nearby regions would probably bring benefits to facilitate further internationalisation of HKU.

## **Chapter 5: The Three Pillars and Changes of Internationalisation in HKU**

In this chapter, findings on institutional actors' perceptions regarding the mechanisms of internationalisation activities in HKU are presented. Section 5.1 focuses on the regulative pillar, whereas sections 5.2 and 5.3 discuss about the normative and cultural-cognitive ones. Each section will include the presentation and discussion of the perceived components of each pillar, the interaction between these components as well as their relationship with the internationalisation activities and changes at HKU.

### **5.1 The Regulative Pillar and Internationalisation Activities in HKU**

This section is divided into three parts. The first part is a brief analysis of the current government policies and strategies related to internationalisation of higher education in Hong Kong. This sets the background for understanding the context of internationalisation in HKU. The second part reveals the components of government policies which the institutional players perceived as influencing the internationalisation activities in the University. In the third part, the actual and perceived government influences are compared, followed by a discussion of the role of the regulative pillar on affecting HKU's internationalisation activities.

#### **5.1.1 Government Policies and Strategies on Internationalisation**

Emphasis on internationalisation in government policies can be traced back to the 1990s, when Hong Kong was experiencing a critical period of political and economic changes. The advocate of building up Hong Kong into a regional centre of education or "an education hub" in Asia can be reflected in a series of government reviews and reports of the local higher education sector since 1990s. A rough sketch of these internationalisation policies and strategies on Hong Kong's higher education is given below.

In face of the transfer of sovereignty from the UK to China in 1997, the University and Polytechnic Grants Committee (the UPGC)<sup>6</sup> issued a report, "Higher Education 1991-2001 - An Interim Report", in 1993, which outlined three scenarios for local higher education institutions in Hong Kong to choose for their future development (UPGC, 1993). The first scenario asked institutions to focus on local student recruitment and local labour market, with teaching gradually shifted towards Cantonese<sup>7</sup>. The second one suggested to increase effort on bilingual teaching, though local focus was still emphasized as in the first scenario. The final one, which was adopted by the UPGC was:

*“The institutions should incorporate centres of excellence having local, regional and international functions. They should provide very high quality bilingual manpower for both Hong Kong and the hinterland and should act as points of reference, particularly in Business and Social Studies and in innovative science and technology for developments in Southern China and more widely. Some undergraduate students and many postgraduate students would be recruited from outside Hong Kong.”*<sup>8</sup> (UPGC, 1993: para. 25. iii).

In this report, it is obvious to see that government stressed the link between higher education and the future development of the city. In order to retain the leading position and development of Hong Kong in China and the Asia Pacific region, government urged higher education institutions to take on “an enhanced regional role” by opening up recruitment for non-local students in both undergraduate and postgraduate studies (UPGC, 1993: para. 36). Since then, higher education policy in Hong Kong started moving towards the direction of internationalisation. Moreover, with the approach of 1997, serving the hinterland in

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<sup>6</sup> The University and Polytechnic Grants Committee (UPGC) was renamed to the University Grants Committee (UGC) in 1995.

<sup>7</sup> The local dialect in Hong Kong.

<sup>8</sup> Italic by the researcher.

Southern China and assisting the economic development of China is becoming one of the responsibilities of the higher education institutions in Hong Kong.

After the interim report in 1993, government reviewed the whole higher education sector in Hong Kong and the UGC published a report, entitled “Higher Education in Hong Kong - A Report by the University Grants Committee” in October, 1996 (UGC, 1996). In the report, the UGC proclaimed that Hong Kong’s economy has become more heterogeneous and diversified. The city had evolved from an export centre to an Asian economic hub, with the emergence of high valued-added industries alongside trading business. In view of its rising significance, “more widely, there are great opportunities for Hong Kong to act as a regional centre, not just for China but also for other neighbouring countries.” (para. 53). To meet this development direction, higher education institutions were encouraged to adopt a wider regional role, incorporate regionalism and internationalism in their development and strengthen their competitive edges. In addition to the provision of an educated workforce, they should commit themselves on their “areas of excellence”, look elsewhere in the world for enriching their international characteristics (para. 33.17), perform and meet local, regional and international functions, open up the recruitment for non-local high-caliber staff and research students, as well as participate in joint teaching and research ventures with overseas partners.

In 2002, the UGC was commissioned by the then Secretary for Education and Manpower to conduct another review of the whole higher education sector in Hong Kong. It was led by the Lord Sutherland, therefore the “Higher Education in Hong Kong – Report of the UGC” is also referred to as the Sutherland Report (UGC, 2002). Similar to the former report, the Sutherland Report continues to stress the context of competition and importance of internationalisation in higher education. The perceived competition from

outside Hong Kong, such as Singapore, Shanghai, the USA, the UK and Australia, became the background against which Hong Kong institutions should position themselves. Universities are urged to develop and concentrate on their “areas of excellence” in both research and teaching (para. 6.7), to benchmark themselves against the best international practices (para. 6.10), to shed “their parochial internal focus upon Hong Kong” (para. 6.31) and to expand their number of non-local students from China and other international sources (para 6.20 and 6.31). They are continuously encouraged to enhance their international characteristic in both teaching and research.

In the most recent UGC report concerning the future development of Hong Kong’s higher education in 2004 (UGC, 2004), government finally convicted the importance and the social and economic roles of higher education. It expressed that the higher education sector in Hong Kong should develop and serve as “the education hub of the region” and universities in Hong Kong are responsible for driving the social and economic development of Hong Kong forward in the context of its unique relationship with Mainland China and the region (para. 4). They should aim to promote “international competitiveness” through “role differentiation (para. 2).

In order to meet the policy objective of turning Hong Kong into an “education hub”, government decided in 2000 to launch a reform of the whole education system in Hong Kong to reorient it in the context of globalisation and knowledge-based society. This reform is usually addressed as the “334 Reform”, as the existing seven years of secondary education will be reduced to six (three years junior and three years senior), and most undergraduate degrees will be extended from three to four years from 2012. By extending the university education to one more year, government in Hong Kong expects this can allow higher education institutions to initiate a host of changes to benefit both students and

society. After the reform, higher education curricula will then inscribe three main themes: whole-person development, a more student-centred learning experience approach and an integrated and broadened curriculum. The ethos of whole-person development means that students can make use of the additional year to join exchange programme to enhance their understanding of other cultures and languages, or have more time to participate in a wider range of campus and outside classroom activities (such as internships). The theme of a more student-centred learning experience means that institutions are expected to provide a more “personalised”, “student-oriented” learning environment for students. And an integrated and broadened curriculum implies that institutions should design more interdisciplinary studies for students to choose from (EMB, 2005:79). In brief, all the above policies put forward by the government are aimed at internationalising the higher education sector of Hong Kong, so that it can move towards the goal of becoming “an education hub” in the region. However, it is interesting to note that the extension of university degree in Hong Kong will go in an opposite direction of the Bologna process in Europe, where the undergraduate degrees are reducing to three years under the theme of building up a “European higher education area” (van der Wende & Huisman, 2004).

Besides the reform, government instigates some specific measures to facilitate the internationalisation process of local universities. These measures focus on the recruitment of non-local students, student exchange and the provision of funding to build up institutions’ capacities for internationalisation. Though Hong Kong is used to have a considerable proportion of student study overseas every year, the city did not have a balanced influx of non-local students in local higher education institutions up till 1990s (Morris et al., 1994). Because higher education in Hong Kong is very heavily subsidised by taxpayers, UGC-funded institutions in early 1990s were only permitted to enroll a

maximum of 2% non-local students (in addition to the approved student number targets) into undergraduate and taught postgraduate degrees, and up to 20% (within the approved student number targets) for research postgraduate courses (UGC, 2000). At that time, undergraduate student population in universities in Hong Kong was very homogenous, mainly made up of local Cantonese speakers.

However, after the review of higher education in 1996 mentioned above, government became determined on attracting more talented students from Mainland China and overseas to come and study in the city. It is done in three main ways (HKSAR, 2003; HKSAR, 2005; HKSAR, 2006; and HKSAR, 2007b). First, the ratios of non-local students were increased. In 1997, government announced formally that the number of non-local undergraduates and taught postgraduates would be increased from 2% to 4% (2% within target and 2% outside), whereas the proportion for research postgraduates be increased from 20% to one-third (within targets) from 1998/99 (HKSAR, 1997b). After that, the recruitment quota has been relaxed two more times. In 2005/06, the quota for publicly-funded sub-degree, undergraduate, and taught postgraduate programmes was extended to 10% of the approved student number targets and to 20% in 2008/09 (HKSAR, 2009b) (Table 14 in Appendix 2). Looking at these non-local students, it is obvious that the government has paid special attention to those outstanding students from Mainland China. In view of the changing relationship with China, institutions were very encouraged to recruit top Mainland Chinese students to enroll in first-degree courses (HKSAR, 1997b:para. 95). It is believed that such admission would facilitate the cross-fertilisation of skills and ideas among local students, inject an element of healthy competition for them and broaden their outlook on the Mainland (HKSAR, 1998:para. 103).

The second way to attract outstanding students, particularly those from the Mainland

China, to come to study in Hong Kong is to offer them scholarship (Table 15 in Appendix 2). With the donation from the Hong Kong Jockey Club (HKJC)<sup>9</sup>, a three-year pilot scheme for recruiting a total of 450 outstanding Mainland students (i.e. 150 students each year) was launched from 1999/2000 to 2001/02. After that, the Scheme was extended for one more year by HKJC (providing scholarships for 100 outstanding Mainland students) jointly with K. K. Ho International Foundation (a one-off donation for another batch of 66 students). In 2002, the government decided to take up the burden itself by providing HK\$90 millions to continue the scheme for another 3 years until it was replaced by the matching grants<sup>10</sup> in 2005/06, under which, universities had to rely on their own private donations in offering scholarships for meritorious non-local students (Legco, 2002; HKSAR, 2003; Legco, 2008). In February 2008, the government agreed on setting up a HK\$1 billion scholarship endowment fund to offer scholarships to outstanding local and non-local students attending full-time publicly-funded degree programmes again (Legco, 2008).

Lastly, employment policies for non-local students were amended. Since 2008, non-local students taking full-time locally-accredited programmes at degree level or above are allowed to take up part-time jobs on campus, full-time summer jobs outside campus and study-related internships arranged by their tertiary institutions without the prior

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<sup>9</sup> The Hong Kong Jockey Club is a charitable horse racing organisation in Hong Kong, which uses its surplus from the horse racing activities for local charity through donation.

<sup>10</sup> The Matching Grant Scheme was initiated by Hong Kong Government in November 2002 on the principle of diversification of funding source in local higher education institutions. Under the scheme, local HEIs are encouraged to launch fund-raising and government matches such private donations on a one-to-one dollar basis. Up till now, four rounds of matching grant have been carried out, in which institutions have raised some \$6.9 billion in private donations and a total of \$3.9 billion of matching grants has been allocated. Website: <http://www.ugc.edu.hk/eng/ugc/publication/press/2009/pr17032009.htm>.

approval of the Immigration Department. After graduation, they can also stay in Hong Kong for up to one year to search for employment (HKSAR, 2007b: para. 93-94). These policies are designed to increase the attractiveness of studying in Hong Kong.

In addition to strengthen non-local student recruitment, government encourages local higher education institutions to internationalise through student exchange programmes. In 2001, government set aside HK\$120 million to provide 1,000 undergraduate student exchange places for UGC-funded institutions annually (Legco, 2002; HKSAR, 2003). This then led to an increase of participation rate in student exchange from 1.8% to about 4% every year. Lastly, in order to recruit more international students and promote Hong Kong as the preferred place of study, government took measures to help institutions to build up their capacity for internationalisation. In 2002/03, the UGC allocated an additional grant of \$40 million (\$5 million per institution) on a matching basis to encourage institutions to establish more partnership for student exchange programmes for a three-year period (HKSAR, 2007b). Moreover, since the lack of enough hostel places has long been a key constraint on the admission of non-local students to Hong Kong and there will be the increase of non-local student quota from 10% to 20%, government already agreed that it would provide 1,840 additional hostel places at a total cost of around HK\$350 millions for all 20% non-local students (UGC, 2007; HKSAR, 2009b). To sum up all these government policies and strategies for the internationalisation of higher education in Hong Kong, a sequential display of these policies and strategies was produced in Table 16 in Appendix 2.

### **5.1.2 Perceived Components of the Regulative Pillar**

After reviewing the government policies on internationalisation of higher education in Hong Kong, this section presents the findings from the field research. It looks at the perceptions of institutional players on the role of these policies and the components of the

regulative pillars in influencing the internationalisation activities in HKU. The policies that respondents regarded as influential can be roughly grouped along two dimensions: provision of resources and changes of policies. Provision of resources by government encompasses the provision of scholarships for non-local students, creation of student exchange places, building of residential halls and funding for research; whereas policy changes include the relaxation of quota for recruiting non-local students, modification of employment policies and reform of the whole education sector (Table 17).

Interviewees mentioned that the relaxation of international student recruitment quota, scholarship for incoming non-local students and modification of existing employment policies are influential in facilitating the recruitment of non-local students in HKU. They admitted the quota policy is helpful and the provision of scholarship for incoming students, especially for PhD students, to study at the University is generous. Moreover, Informant C told the researcher that government has recently modified some existing employment policies, such as allowing full-time non-local degree students to stay longer in Hong Kong after graduation to seek for employment. All these government policies help to increase the attractiveness of Hong Kong and HKU as a destination of study for non-local students.

In terms of funding for student exchange, the research finds out two different positions exist among institutional actors. Some state that the funding is helpful for increasing the scope and speed of internationalisation in the University; others commented that it is not enough. Last but not least, informants also assured the researcher that the new “334 Reform” will provide an opportunity for the University to incorporate elements of cross-cultural understanding and inter-cultural communication in the new curriculum. In fact, the University has already decided that the concept of global vision and experiential learning will become core themes in the new curriculum in 2012 (Informant F).

**Table 17: Perceived Influence of Government Policy on Internationalisation of HKU**

	International Student Recruitment			Funding for Student Exchange	Provision of Residential Hall	Funding for Research	The “334 Reform”	Overall Comment on Government Policies	Perceived Relation between Government Policy & Internationalisation in HKU	Suggestions for Government
	Quota	Scholarship	Employment Policies							
<b>A</b>	Restrictive					Not enough		- Quite restrictive - Lack of perspective	Not so much	
<b>B</b>	Helpful			Helpful	Not enough			- Partly positive - Not enough effort	Not really	Yes, suggest government to: - Increase input of resources - Develop overall positioning and promotion strategy
<b>C</b>		Helpful to certain extent	Helpful to certain extent					- “Half-hearted” - Some initiatives - Some value-added support - Lack of clear policy - Not enough funding	Some, but still depends on the University	Yes, suggest government to: - Set up and fund a promotional body for the sector
<b>D</b>				Little				- Disappointed - Some initiatives - Lack of direction - Not enough resources	No	
<b>E</b>	Not concrete	Generous						- The scholarship is generous - Still depends on the University itself - Lack of funding for coordinative effort	No	Yes, suggest government to: - Market the whole sector
<b>F</b>	Restrictive				Not enough		Strong	- Partly positive, but still not enough motivation	No	Yes, suggest government to: - Further relax the recruitment quota

Source: From fieldwork interviews by the researcher.

### **5.1.3 A Match Between the Perceived and Actual Components of Government**

#### **Policies on Internationalisation of HKU**

From the results of sections 5.1.1 and 5.1.2, it can be seen that, except benchmarking for the best practices, there is a good match between the actual and perceived components of government policies on HKU's internationalisation activities (see Table 18). They are international student recruitment, funding for student exchange, funding for building up institutional capacities and the "334 Reform". In this match, three points have to be noted. First, although respondents did not directly express the impact of benchmarking advocated by government as a factor which influences HKU's internationalisation, results in the section 5.2.1.2 will show that institutional actors in HKU actively involve in benchmarking in reality. Further discussion of this aspect will be presented when reflection on the cultural-cognitive pillar is developed.

Second, funding for research will be eliminated for further analysis in this study. It is because there is only one respondent (Informant A) mentioned about its significance on the internationalisation in HKU during the interviews, and the emphases of government policies revealed in the policy analysis in section 5.1 are mainly on international student recruitment, student exchange and launching of new curriculum under the new "334 Reform". Therefore, it was decided to confine the research focus in accordance with respondents' replies by not including internationalisation of research. Third, with such a good match found between the actual and perceived policy components of non-local student recruitment, funding for exchange, funding for building up institutional capacities, policy to increase international emphasis in new curriculum and benchmarking, when the term "government policies" are referred to in the later analyses, they are supposed to mean the same thing, either the actual ones or perceived policies, unless otherwise specified.

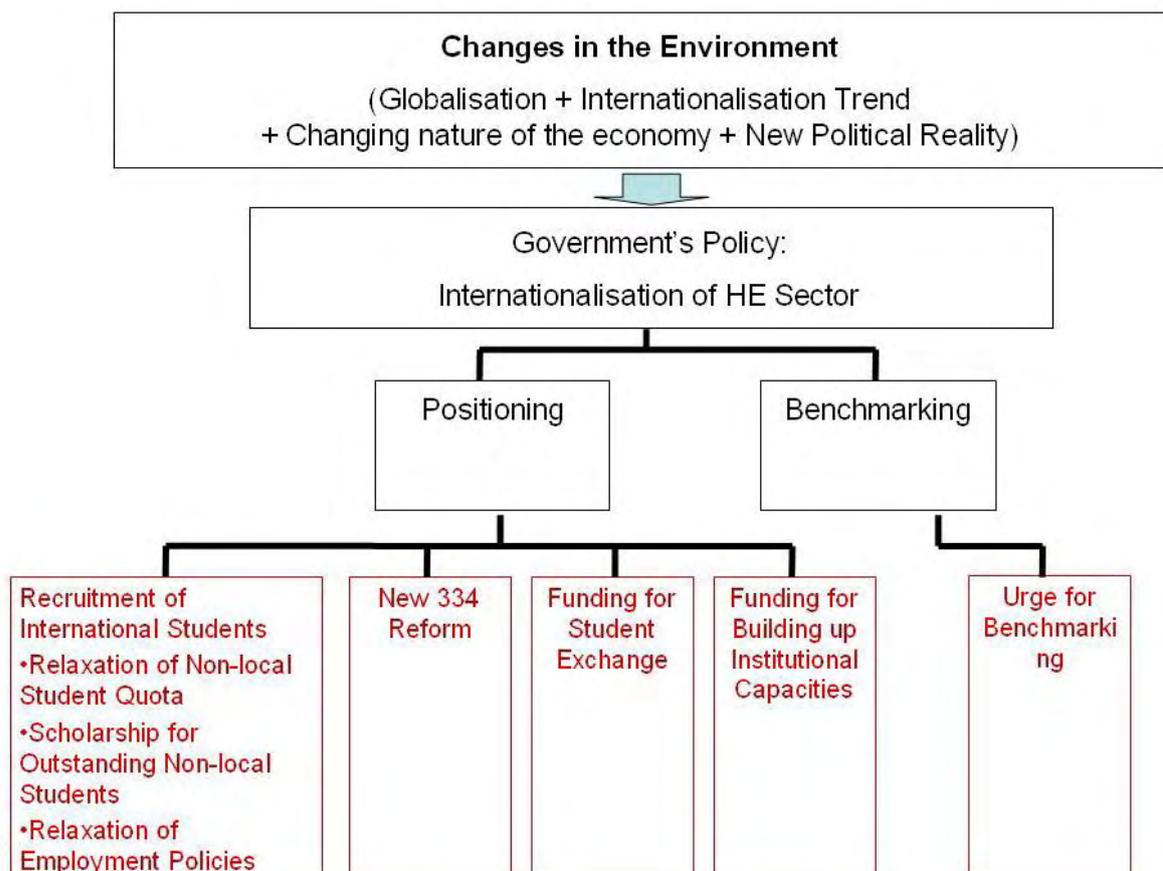
**Table 18: A Match between Actual and Perceived Components of Government Policies which Influence Internationalisation in HKU**

<b>Actual Government Policies on Internationalisation of HE Sector in Hong Kong (From Table 16)</b>	<b>Positioning</b>					<b>Benchmarking</b>
	Recruitment of Non-local Students 1. Relaxation of non-local student quota 2. Scholarship for outstanding non-local students recruitment 3. Relaxation of employment policies for non-local students	Funding for student exchange	Funding for building up institutional capacities	No analysis on funding for research	New “334 Reform” with 3 themes: 1. Whole-person development 2. A more student-centered learning experience approach 3. An integrated and broadened curriculum	Benchmarking for the best practices
<b>Perceived Government Policies on Influencing Internationalisation in HKU (From Table 17)</b>	Policy on International Student Recruitment 1. Quota 2. Scholarship 3. Employment Policies	Funding for student exchange	Provision of residential hall	Funding for research	The new structure & curriculum under the “334 Reform”	Not mentioned directly by interviewees. but a detailed discussion on benchmarking will be made in section 5.2.1.2 when talk about the cultural-cognitive pillar

Source: By combining Tables 16 and 17.

To summarize, the emphases, rationales and interaction of these internationalisation policies are visualized in Diagram 3. It can be seen that internationalisation policy and education reform place a strong emphasis on positioning and benchmarking of the whole higher education sector of Hong Kong. They can be regarded partly as a strategy for the continuous survival of the city in response to the changing role of its economy, the internationalisation trend and globalisation force in the surrounding environment, and partly the forthcoming political circumstances that Hong Kong would become part of China again.

**Diagram 3: Rationales of Government’s Internationalisation Policy in Hong Kong**



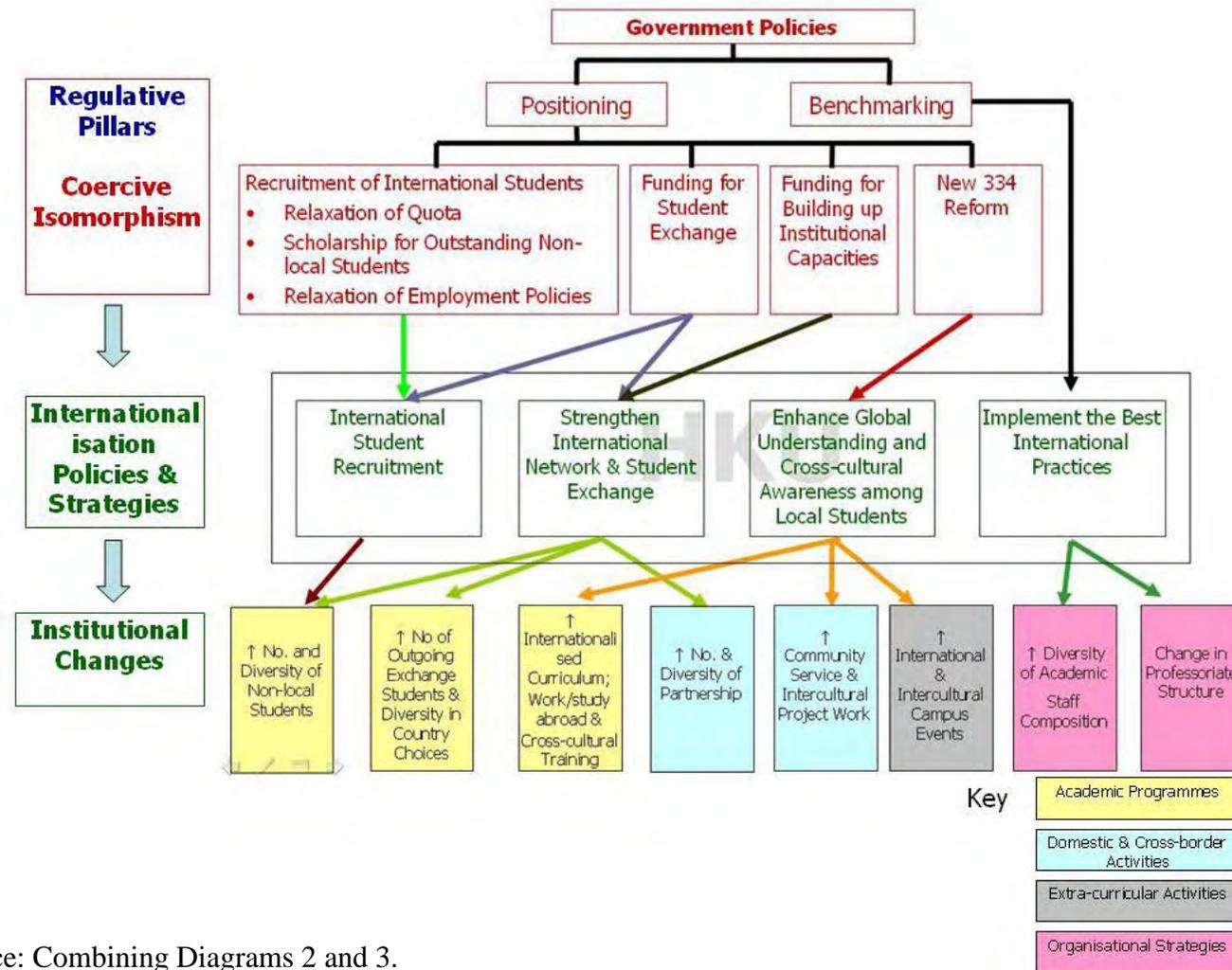
Source: From Table 18.

#### **5.1.4 The Regulative Pillar and Changes of Internationalisation Activities in HKU**

In order to find out the extent of impact of government policies on HKU's internationalisation policies and changes, the components of the regulative pillar summarized in Diagram 3 are matched with the University strategic plans and empirical findings on changes in internationalisation activities revealed in Diagram 2 to form Diagram 4. It is assumed that if government policies exist in precedence of the University's policies, the changes are likely to be due to such government policies.

Looking at the recruitment of international students, the perceived increase in number and diversity of non-local students in campus seems to be associated with the government policies of non-local student recruitment (the relaxation of recruitment quota, provision of scholarship for recruiting outstanding non-local students and modification of employment policies) and funding for student exchange (which helps to send out and therefore bring in more exchange students). In coming future, it is expected that the number of non-local students will further increase in HKU as the government has relaxed the current quota for non-local students from 10% to 20% and revised the current employment policy of allowing non-local graduates to engage in summer job and internship and stay longer in Hong Kong to look for employment after graduation in 2008. In respond to these changes in government policies, the University has extended its "Admission of Undergraduate Students from the Mainland Scheme" to include non-scholarship student recruitment in 2008.

**Diagram 4: A Match of the Regulative Pillar with the Strategies and Changes of Internationalisation in HKU**



Source: Combining Diagrams 2 and 3.

In terms of internationalisation networks, alliances and student exchange, a mild relationship between government policies and changes in the University also seems to be present. The provision of funding for student exchange and funding for building up institutional capacities by government can be associated with the increased number and diversity of non-local students and international partnership, the increased number of outgoing exchange students and their wider choice of countries. However, one point has to be noted here is that the University has already run its own student exchange programme (the “HKU Worldwide Student Exchange Programme for Undergraduate Students”) in 1998/99 before any government funding was available. It is clear here again that factors in addition to government coercive force are in play in the internationalisation process of HKU. But still, the launching of “HKU Worldwide China Programme” in 2002/03 can be argued as a result of the additional policy emphasis and funding for student exchange offered by the government.

Concerning the University’s initiative to strengthen the international elements of curriculum, such as the incorporation of internationalism in the new curriculum in 2012, and the launching of “Global Citizenship Programme” in the Faculty of Social Sciences in 2008, it is probably related to the new educational reform of higher education in Hong Kong. Under the themes of whole-person development, a more student-centered learning experience approach and an integrated and broadened curriculum in the “334 Reform”, students are encouraged to seek exchange opportunities to enhance their understanding of other cultures and languages, to participate more in outside classroom activities and internships. As a result, the enhanced international dimension in the new curriculum, the increased number of international and intercultural campus events, student-initiated community service and intercultural project works in HKU can be considered as

developing in line with government's objectives. Lastly, in accordance with the urge by the UGC in its report in 2002 ("Higher Education in Hong Kong – Report of the UGC), the University also looks around the world for the best ways of governance (such as the change of professorate structure in departments mentioned in section 4.3.5), makes effort in increasing the diversity of its academic staff composition, as well as provides more supportive infrastructures for internationalisation. All these represent the University's responses to government's urge for benchmarking (further discussion on the implementation of the best international practices will be given in section 5.2.1.2).

From the above matching between government policies, University's strategies and changes in internationalisation activities through document reviews and policy analyses, there is a good reason to say that the regulative pillar is impacting on the internationalisation process in HKU through coercive isomorphism as suggested by the institutional theory. In order to validate such claim and tap a more thorough picture of the relationship between government policies and internationalisation of HKU, we now turn to look at the actual views and perceptions offered by the institutional actors in regard to the internationalisation process in HKU. Referring back to Table 17, it can be seen that, generally speaking, interviews with institutional actors reveal that they are positive towards the present stage of internationalisation in HKU. However, some of them also argued that the government does not have a clear policy and direction for internationalisation in every aspect of society, including higher education, and it is not providing sufficient funding and resources for the internationalisation activities of universities in Hong Kong. Informant C criticized the government is only "half-hearted". Informants A and D commented the government policies as restrictive and disappointing. "Government does not have that kind of view. Every thing which the government does is just for HK... This is not the capacity of

an international city.” (Informant A). Concerning the policy direction, Informant C reflected that, “Personally, what I don’t see is a clear policy which is backed up, and can provide a way for understanding and arguing why we are doing it.”. His view is also echoed by Informant D, who said that, “I think what is disappointing about the government is its lack of a macro perspective and direction for strategic development”. Regarding funding and resources, the overall comments are expressed like these, “government is not putting much funding up to community debate.” (Informant C) and “about the resources provided by the government on internationalisation, I think it is not a lot.” (Informant D).

In fact, when asked more directly if any relationship exists between government policies and internationalisation of HKU, nearly all respondents (five out of six) gave “No” in their answers. For example, Informant B said that, “not necessarily influenced by government. We have been doing it already.” and Informant F said, “I don’t feel it is government’s motivation for us to internationalise.”. Some regarded the non-local student recruitment policy is restrictive in the sense that the University can not admit international students above the quota limit, even if it wants to. A few of them argued that the government is not providing enough places of residential halls, which is a decisive factor for the internationalisation of HKU. As the “University can not receive more students, and thus fail to send out more” (Informant F). The insufficiency of residential places results in the situation that “student exchange has become saturated” (Informant B). Besides the above, one respondent (Informant A) mentioned about the funding on research provided by government in relation to the internationalisation activities in HKU. He commented that, despite the availability of research funding, it is too small in amount and not enough. “The whole sum of amount from the Research Grants Committee is very small. It is sometimes even smaller than a major project in the US.”. These negative comments on government

policies seem to reveal that government policies are not the most important and critical factors in the University's internationalisation process. Besides the coercive imposition from government, some other factors should exist to explain why HKU engages so much in internationalisation.

Related to such comments made by respondents about the impact of government policy on internationalisation in HKU, three interesting points can be noted. First, as most respondents are not very satisfied with what the government is doing to support the University's internationalisation process, some of them even made suggestions of what it should do. Second, most of these suggestions come from making references or comparisons with other institutions or countries, which the respondents perceived as doing well with regard to their suggestions. Third, those suggestions focus on positioning and marketing the whole higher education of Hong Kong in the global arena, not just concentrated on HKU alone. For example, Informant B urged the government to promote and position Hong Kong as an education hub, admitted that Singapore is doing well on this and Harvard is quite a successful case. She said,

“HKU should make more effort to make Government realize if we want to become an Asia's World City, education should be an important platform. Yes, *Singapore* is doing well on it...Government should think some policies to *promote the international image of the education sector of Hong Kong*, as it is not easy for an individual university to make any impact... just like *Harvard* can achieve what it is related to the overall development strategy of the country...Government should have some actions to *make Hong Kong a real education hub*, should help to *make Hong Kong's image* not only as a business centre, but also *a good education centre*, where you can know about both Chinese and Western cultures”.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Italic by the researcher.

Similarly, when Informant C made a suggestion to the government on funding for a middle-level inter-university body to promote the whole higher education of Hong Kong, he referred to the British Council and said, “what is desperately needed is a body which acts to work for all universities, basically a promotional body, like the *British Council*, which can only be supported by government.”.

### **5.1.5 Summary and Analysis**

In Section, 5.1.1, reviews on government documents and policies by the researcher show the importance and relevance of the regulative pillar in the internationalisation process of the University. This is supported in the interviews with institutional actors in section 5.1.2 that they also perceived government policies on international student recruitment, funding for student exchange, provision of residential hall, funding for research and the new “334 Reform” under the themes of positioning and benchmarking are the main components of the regulative pillar in affecting internationalisation in HKU. However, when institutional actors are asked directly about such impact, it is surprising to hear most of them deny its existence (section 5.1.4). Furthermore, some institutional actors even made comments on the government for its lack of a clear policy and funding for the University to internationalise, and suggested government on how it can do better. For example, they are eager to advise the government for a better promotion and positioning of the city and the whole higher education sector of Hong Kong in the international arena.

When examine closer at their suggestions, it can be seen that what they expected the government to do is actually an echo of the government’s rationales for promoting internationalisation in local universities. Therefore, the negative responses expressed by the interviewees should not be viewed simply as their rejections of any government impact on the internationalisation activities in the University. To be more precise, respondents are

just dissatisfied with what the government is doing, as it is not doing enough nor providing an overarching direction and policy for the whole sector. It should be admitted that the regulative pillar, although not very strong and influential, does foster changes in the internationalisation activities of HKU. In addition, we can see that more than a passive receiver of government policies, university can take a proactive role in fostering changes in itself. When it perceives government is not doing enough, it can become an advocator and advisor for the government, pushing it to enhance its resource input or make further policy improvements.

After all, since a discrepancy exists between the policy analysis and institutional actors' views on the impact of government policies on internationalisation in HKU, the researcher assumes that there should be some other influential factors which are conducive to the internationalisation process. Therefore, the research will go on to find out why such discrepancy exists and what are the actual mechanisms resulting in the internationalisation activities in HKU. This will be done by examining other possible factors. First, as Informant B said that: "we have been doing it (internationalisation) already", we can assume that internationalisation in HKU may also be due to its history, culture, norms, values and traditions, which the University can use to screen for what to do and not to do. It may especially be true as each of the eight UGC-funded institutions in Hong Kong, including HKU, is itself an autonomous statutory body and enjoys a high degree of academic and institutional autonomy. Second, since both rationales underlying government policies for internationalisation and the respondents' suggestions to government stress on positioning, benchmarking, competition and survival, they may also be the forces that put the university into "doing what it has been doing". As a result, internationalisation in HKU can be argued as the result of a combination of different factors. The role played by

government in the internationalisation process of HKU may only be supportive and facilitating, and the real push may come from the institution itself. In the following sections, we will further explore this issue by examining the other two pillars of the institutional theory, i.e. the normative and cultural-cognitive pillars, so that a more complete picture can be generated.

## **5.2 The Cultural-cognitive Pillar and Internationalisation Activities in HKU**

After discussing the influences of the regulative pillar, this section investigates into the role of cultural-cognitive pillar in the internationalisation of HKU. As mentioned in chapter three, the cultural-cognitive pillar of an institution refers to the shared conceptions or common framework of meanings that institutional actors used to guide their actions and reactions (Scott, 2001). The perceived components of the cultural-cognitive pillar mentioned by the institutional actors will be presented in details in Section 5.2.1. From the interviews, it is founded that positioning, branding, benchmarking, ranking, international trend and necessity are regarded as the cultural-cognitive aspects that pushes the University to compare, compete and mimic others, so as to achieve a good reputation for its continuous survival. In Section 5.2.2, we will examine the interaction and relationship of these different components. Lastly in section 5.2.3, there will be a discussion on how and why these cultural-cognitive elements influence the University's internationalisation process.

### **5.2.1 Perceived Components of the Cultural-cognitive Pillar**

In this study, the notions of positioning, branding, benchmarking and ranking have been identified by the institutional actors as important framework of reference in the internationalisation of HKU, which can enhance the University's reputation and social

legitimacy in the field. Their perceptions on these cultural-cognitive components are shown in Table 19.

**Table 19: Perceived Cultural-cognitive Influences for Internationalisation in HKU**

	Positioning	Branding	Benchmarking	Ranking	Trend	Necessity & Survival	Perceived Relationship Between Cultural-cognitive Components & Internationalisation in HKU
<b>A</b>	*		*	*		*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- It is a necessity. We want to survive.</li> <li>- You are forced to do internationalisation.</li> </ul>
<b>B</b>	*						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The ranking is definitely a good thing.</li> </ul>
<b>C</b>	*	*	*			*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- We need that internationalisation dimension to survive.</li> </ul>
<b>D</b>	*	*	*			*	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- It is a necessity.</li> </ul>
<b>E</b>	*		*	*	*		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- It is an international trend to become internationalise. HKU is just part of that trend.</li> </ul>
<b>F</b>			*		*		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Internationalisation is a global trend.</li> <li>- We do it because we feel it is a need to do so.</li> </ul>

Source: From fieldwork interviews by the researcher.

### 5.2.1.1 Positioning and Branding

Nearly all informants mentioned that positioning is the main force of internationalisation for HKU, and such positioning appears to be related to the branding of the University. Branding means that the University wants to build up its identity and recognition in the field. Looking at the wider context, internationalisation is a means for moving Hong Kong towards the goal of building into an education hub of the region. Therefore, the branding HKU focuses on two themes: to become an international university of “an education hub” in Asia and “a window to China”, as Informant E expressed, “our (HKU’s) niche is offering a window of China and Asia.” Other respondents

also suggested that Hong Kong should differentiate with other cities in China and become a window of China. Informant D said again, “If we want to position Hong Kong as an Asia’s World City, what are the reasons overseas students come to study in Hong Kong? The reason they come is to know more about China and Asia.” The logic behind such suggestion is explained well by Informant A,

“It is only because of China that Hong Kong University becomes a boom in the international arena. It is not because Hong Kong alone. Hong Kong alone has lost its value. It is because *it is one of the most international cities in China that people will use it as a window to China, and China uses it as a window to the outside world.* So Hong Kong has to stay more international than China in order to play its role.”<sup>12</sup>

By positioning HKU in accordance with these two themes, it is expected that the University will build up a good brand, which will be useful for establishing more partnerships and cooperation with overseas universities. “We have the brand. When overseas universities think of cooperation with local universities in Hong Kong, it (HKU) is an obvious choice.” (Informant D). Similarly, branding is associated with international research, as Informant C explained:

“branding is very much aligned with international research. A two way thing: the better the quality of international research, the better the value of branding. The better the value of branding, the better the quality the research.”

In sum, the enhancement of internationalisation in HKU can be interpreted as a means to position the University, the city and the region in the “global arena”. It implies that internationalisation of higher education is a way to legitimate the position of Asia in the global economic order.

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<sup>12</sup> Italic by the researcher.

### 5.2.1.2 Benchmarking

Besides positioning, another cultural-cognitive influence that is mentioned very often by interviewees is benchmarking. Benchmarking is a process which organisations evaluate themselves in relation to some best practices in their own field. According to the institutional actors, what benchmarking means in HKU is to observe other universities and learn the good things from them. For example, Informant C said that, “Not exactly benchmarking, but we would look at what other universities, especially those in the U21 Consortium, are doing.”. He admitted that some universities in the consortium are good models in branding themselves from which HKU should learn:

“They are doing very good in the way they brand themselves. They certainly call the attention of the world. They are very clever and doing a good job...The branding they did is very pointed and clever, that is something we should learn.” (Informant C).

Moreover, the aim to allow all students to go abroad for one year in their undergraduate study before 2012 “is more or less the policy at Harvard” (Informant A), and “the concept of service learning (which) was first started in the USA. We (HKU) do learn from the experiences of other places” (Informant F). A very vivid example that shows practices in other universities can influence the direction and content of internationalisation at HKU is quoted by Informant C. After his visit to the University of Cambridge, he was impressed by what it is doing in development aid and plans to model it in HKU.

“I was in Cambridge a couple of weeks ago, they are doing a lot of developmental work...They are working with communities in the least developed countries. It strikes me. At the moment here in Hong Kong, the Hong Kong government does very little in developmental work...As a university, we can't offer money but we can offer education. We can do a lot in helping this area. We now start to work with a number of less developed countries in Asia. What we are hoping is to give scholarship to students from some of these countries, such as Pakistan, Burma and North Korea, where it is difficult for people within their salary structure to afford the tuition fee in Hong

Kong... When we talk about the values of internationalisation, development aid should also be an area that we start to think about.”

By looking around the world and referring to what other universities are doing, benchmarking, policy referencing, modeling and transfer are common practices in HKU. If practices elsewhere are found suitable, they are very likely to be adopted and further developed locally. As reflected by Informant A: “We always benchmark ourselves with international arena.” And it is interesting to note that HKU only benchmarks itself against top universities in the world and not the local ones.

“First and foremost, universities now benchmark themselves against other universities around the world. We don’t benchmark ourselves against local Hong Kong institutions but against Berkeley, Columbia and Oxford.” (Informant C).

### **5.2.1.3 Ranking**

Institutional actors also agreed that the good ranking HKU has is helpful for its internationalisation. A good ranking can enhance the University’s reputation and facilitate it to build up more partnership or attract more and better non-local students. As a result, ranking helps to further enhance the international characteristics of the University.

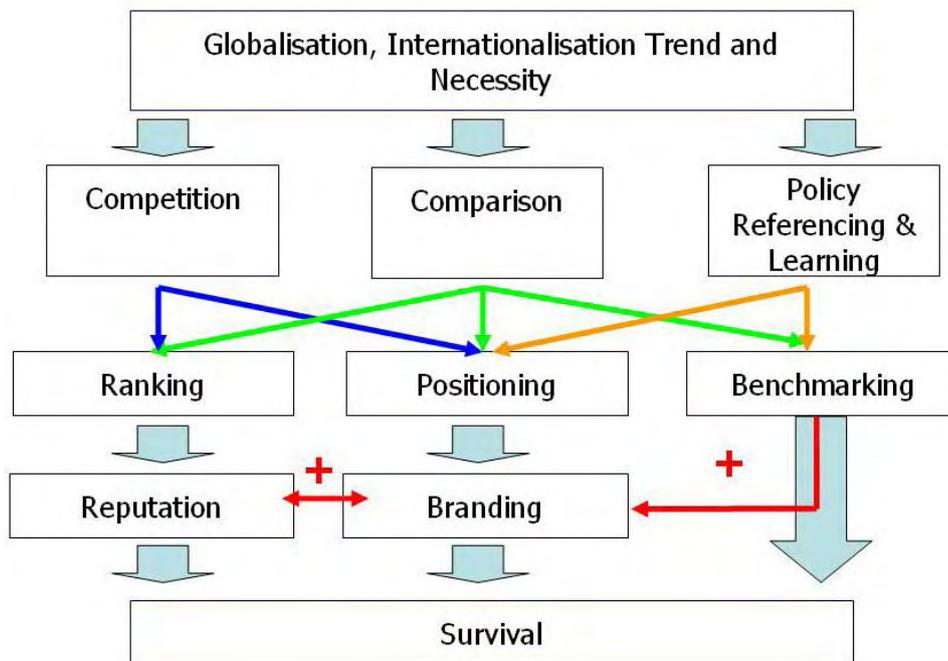
“So if you go somewhere in the world, even if people have not heard about HKU, which is often the case, you can start showing them the statistics to prove that we are good. The Times Higher Education Ranking is really very useful. So being HKU opens the door and creates opportunities... The international ranking is very helpful. It is a two-way reinforcement between ranking and internationalisation.” (Informant E).

Regarding the sources of ranking, respondents pointed out that it is related to the continuous effort, educational vision and philosophy on internationalisation of the University. Informant C said, “The ranking is definitely a good thing for HKU. We have a good ranking. But I believe this is from our educational vision and philosophy in the past. We have been doing it.”.

## 5.2.2 Interaction of the Cultural-cognitive Components

After discovering the main cultural-cognitive components in influencing the internationalisation activities of HKU, this section figures out the relationship between these components. Their interaction is visualized in Diagram 5 and further explanation will be given below.

**Diagram 5: Interaction between Different Components of the Cultural-Cognitive Pillar**



### 5.2.2.1 Globalisation, Internationalisation Trend, Necessity and Survival

From the interviews, it is founded out that the reasons for HKU to engage in ranking, positioning and benchmarking are due to global trend and need for survival. Interviewees admitted that internationalisation in HKU is a response to globalisation that the University must join. “Because the world was much less global and now it is much more global...It is a real necessity...Otherwise, you will be excluded from the international community.”

(Informant A) and “HKU is just part of that trend.” (Informant E). For a better insight into this global trend, Informant F told the researcher that:

“In fact, internationalisation is what universities all over the world are doing. A lot of higher education systems in the world are undergoing reforms. Internationalisation and global vision are always an important part of them. The main reason for internationalisation is that the world has changed. As the world has changed, our education has to adjust to this... *Internationalisation is a global trend, every one sees the trend and thus education has to respond to the trend.* Every university is working along the same direction in general.”<sup>13</sup>

In face of this global trend, HKU has to respond and become more and more international. “We do it (internationalisation) because we feel it is a need to do so.” (Informant F). “You are forced to do internationalisation” (Informant A). Internationalisation is needed for the continuous survival of the University and the city in the international arena, as Informant C expressed, “Hong Kong is supposed to be a world city. Though a small community, it needs that international dimension to survive”. “We want to survive.” (Informant A).

#### **5.2.2.2 Positioning Through Competition, Comparison and Policy Referencing**

In order to survive, the University has to internationalise and position itself. Internationalisation strategy links with positioning; and international dimension is part of the positioning strategy. “It is a necessity. How we defend Hong Kong? It is related to the positioning of Hong Kong in the world.” (Informant D). As discussed, the positioning of the University centers on two themes: to become an international university of an education hub in Asia and a window to China. Looking closer to this positioning stance, three points can be highlighted. First, the positioning of HKU is always linked with the

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<sup>13</sup> Italic by the researcher.

positioning of the whole city from a macro perspective, as Informant D said, “Internationalisation should be related to the position of Hong Kong from a macro perspective, not just focus on education.”. University, being one of the social institutions, should strength its positioning not only for its own internationalisation profile, but also for the sake of the whole city. Therefore, the internationalisation policy in HKU is revealed to be in line with the positioning policy of government, which suggests turning Hong Kong into “an educational hub”.

Second, the internationalisation and positioning strategies of the University and city of Hong Kong are always viewed against competition and comparison with other countries, especially those nearby Asian countries, such as Malaysia and Singapore. Informant D expressed, “When we look from a macro comparative perspective, both Singapore and Malaysia are working towards building themselves as regional hubs...Why not Hong Kong do it?”. Therefore, “we (HKU) should make more effort to make government realises if we want to become an Asia’s World City, education should be an important platform.” (Informant B). Third, other than comparison, the positioning strategy connotes policy referencing and learning when appropriate. As reflected by Informant C,

“We should observe and look at what other countries are doing. For example, Singapore and Malaysia, which are not far away from us, are very aggressive in recruiting non-local students and investing in internationalisation.”

### **5.2.2.3 Benchmarking, Branding and Reputation**

Other than comparing and learning from nearby Asia countries, HKU also looks for and benchmarks good models and practices from around the world. For example, Informant C admitted that some universities in the U21 Consortium are good models in branding themselves which HKU should learn from. A good brand can bring the University

with obvious benefits in its internationalisation process. Branding strengthens the reputation of the University. With increased reputation, HKU becomes more well-known, and therefore can have an advantage on establishing partnerships and research collaboration with overseas universities. These internationalisation activities in the end can strengthen the brand and chance of survival for the University. Branding, reputation and internationalisation are positively reinforcing each other.

#### **5.2.2.4 Ranking and Reputation**

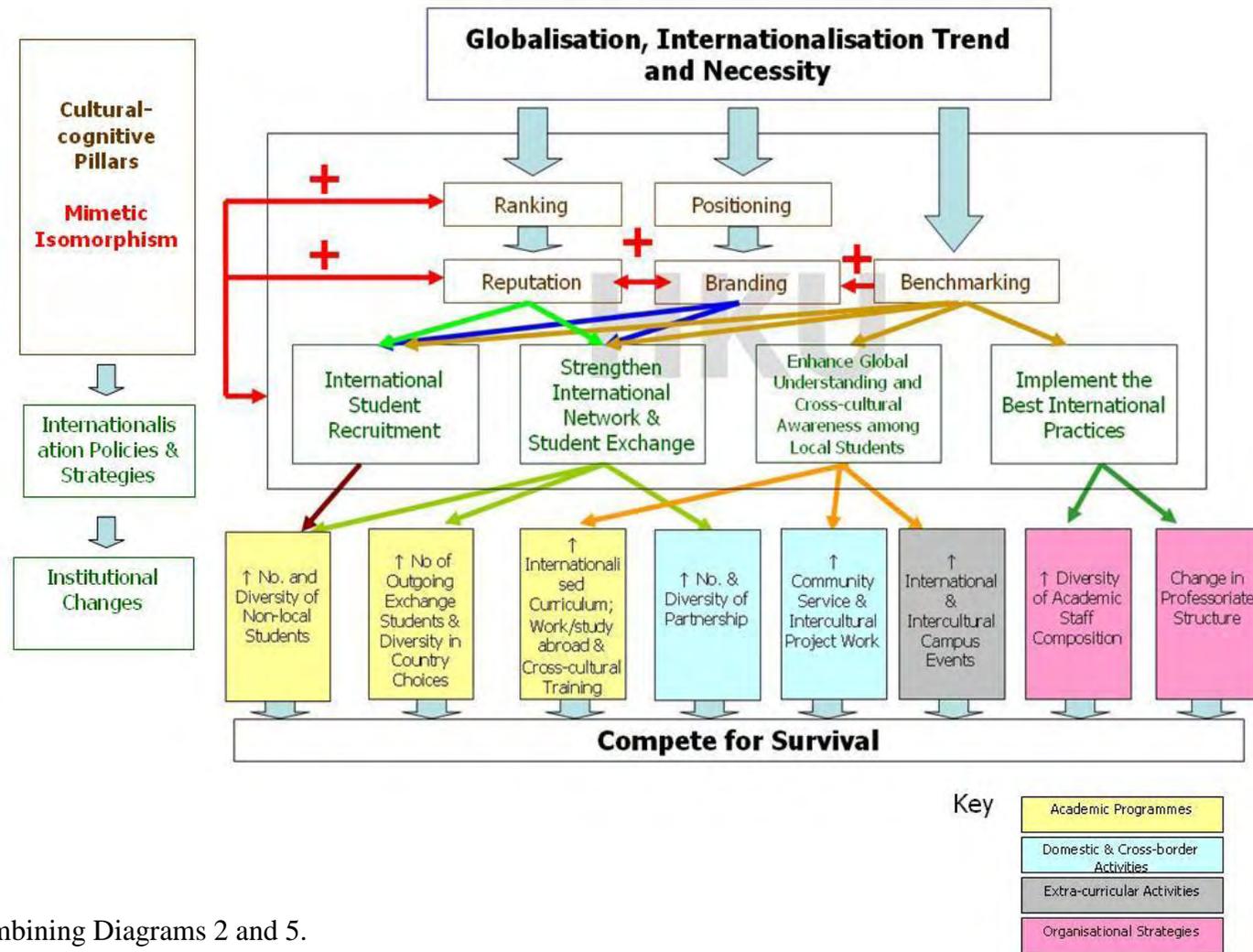
According to the respondents, another way to build up the reputation for the University is international ranking. From the documents and most sources of publications of the University, it can be confirmed that HKU is very much aspired to be a top university in the world. The Vice-Chancellor openly admitted that it was a wish of the Council Chairman to make HKU one of the top 25 universities in the world when he took up his office in 2002 (HKU, 2007b:2). Moreover, the ranking of the University on the “Times Higher Education - QS World University Rankings” always appears on HKU’s publications, such as the annual report of the University, the Review (HKU, 2007b; HKU, 2008a:4). Ranking is one of the indicators which the University used to assure the public about its effort on internationalisation. Similar to branding, ranking is related positively with the reputation and internationalisation of HKU. It can increase University’s reputation, therefore it is helpful for the internationalisation of HKU, as “internationalisation is aligned with reputation” (Informant C). Good ranking and good reputation open up more opportunities for the University to internationalise.

### **5.2.3 The Perceived Relationship Between the Cultural-cognitive Pillar and Internationalisation Activities in HKU**

From the above, it can be concluded that positioning, branding, benchmarking, ranking and reputation are the core cultural-cognitive components that influence the internationalisation of HKU. They are all important in the sense that they will enhance the reputation of the University, and thus facilitate its further internationalisation activities. The interaction and relationship between these components and their influences on the internationalisation activities in HKU is visualized in Diagram 6. Among these cultural-cognitive components, benchmarking seems to be the most decisive and overarching cultural-cognitive component underlying all the internationalisation activities. During the interview, when informants were asked if the University looks to other very top universities in the world, observes their changes and incorporates things from them, Informant A admitted in a very straightforward way that, “Yes, it is necessary and good.”. He quoted the example of the notion of service learning which will be built into the new curriculum after 2012 is adapted from the practices in the US. Moreover, when Informant E commented on the University for its lack of an international graduate school, he compared and benchmarked HKU with the British and American counterparts. He said:

“If you look at any single campuses in Britain and America, they are really drawing in a lot of students from different parts of the world and they have got a lot of scholarship in place to allow that to happen...In Hong Kong, we need to work harder on that.”

Diagram 6: Perceived Relationship between the Cultural-Cognitive Pillar and Changes in Internationalisation Activities of HKU



Source: By combining Diagrams 2 and 5.

By learning and mimicking the best ways of doing things from other universities, especially those top ones in the world, HKU enriches its international dimensions in curriculum, strengthens its international student recruitment, international network and student exchange, which in turn lead to changes in the number and diversity of non-local students and partnerships, increase in the number of outgoing exchanges, international campus events, student-initiated community service and intercultural project work, enrichment of international elements in its curriculum, in addition to the changes in academic staff structure and increased diversity of academic staff composition.

#### **5.2.4 Summary and Analysis**

This section shows that positioning, branding, benchmarking, ranking and reputation are the most important elements of the cultural-cognitive pillar perceived by the institutional actors in HKU as influencing the internationalisation activities there. They operate on the maxim of comparison, competition and policy referencing as a result of the pressure of global trend and survival needs. While comparing and competing with other universities or educational systems, the University also observes what is happening in the world and finds some good practices for benchmarking, so that a better positioning and brand can be created. Similarly, ranking is good that it strengthens the reputation of the University. Working hand in hand, both branding and ranking widen the opportunities for HKU to engage in further internationalisation activities. Therefore, it can be said that HKU also internationalises as a result of mimetic isomorphism.

However, it should be noted too that when we talk about the positioning, branding and benchmarking of HKU, what the University is doing is largely conditioned or an echo of the government's internationalisation policy of the whole higher education sector in Hong Kong, i.e., to build up Hong Kong into an Asia's World City and an education hub in Asia.

Moreover, the reputation and ranking of HKU is very much built upon its historical legacy, educational vision and mission. “I believe this (ranking) is from our educational vision and philosophy in the past.” (Informant D). HKU does not mimic and model others in a simple and direct way. The role of the cultural-cognitive pillar in the internationalisation of HKU depends on its interplay with other pillars and forces. Therefore, we now turn to look at the final pillar mentioned in the institutional theory, the normative pillar.

### **5.3 The Normative Pillar and Internationalisation Activities in HKU**

Followed from the previous section, this section examines the role of normative pillar in the internationalisation of HKU. A brief historical outline of the University is presented in section 5.3.1. Then, perceived components of the normative pillar tapped from interviews with institutional actors are shown and discussed in section 5.3.2. According to the interviewees, the pillar encompasses the following dimensions: history, culture, tradition, norms and values. Section 5.3.3 examines the interaction of these components, and section 5.3.4 is a discussion on how and why these normative elements impact on the University’s internationalisation process.

#### **5.3.1 History of the University of Hong Kong**

As briefly mentioned in chapter one, HKU is the first university founded in Hong Kong in 1911 by incorporating the Hong Kong College of Medicine. The College, established in 1887, was aimed at offering professional medical education to Chinese in Hong Kong and the nearby regions. The then Governor, Lugard, advocated the establishment of the university on various grounds. The University was supposed to serve as a symbol of the Western cultural tradition in the Far East, a meeting place for Chinese and Western cultures, and a lighthouse of learning (Postiglione and Mak, 1997:58). Seeing

the flourish of different missionary colleges in China set up by other Western powers, it was believed that a university in the East could help to maintain the British prestige in East Asia, consolidate the relations between Britain and China and protect British interests in the region against the influences of the Japanese and American (Postiglione and Mak, 1997; HKU, 2002). Furthermore, in the early twentieth century, when Late Qing Dynasty of China launched its modernization reforms to replace the imperial civil service examinations with a modern education system, Lugard's intention of forming a university in Hong Kong would meet the needs for higher education of an awakening China (Postiglione and Mak, 1997). Since the British considerations were clearly reflected in its establishment, HKU has a strong British cultural heritage in terms of its medium of instruction, system of governance and academic structure. The University was staffed mainly with academics from Britain in its early days. It has been teaching a Western curriculum in the English language up till the present (Teather et al., 1997). Recognizing the importance of personal development of students, the University also required students to reside in University hostels like those civic universities in the UK (HKU, 2008a). Similar to other UGC-funded universities in Hong Kong, HKU is an autonomous body with its own ordinance and governing council. It is entitled to enjoy substantial freedom in the control of curricula and academic standards, selection of staff and students, and internal allocation of resources.

Though the University was established to provide a modern tertiary education for Chinese students, students of other nationalities also came to study in HKU in its early days, (HKU, 2002). It provided young people in the region with a more convenient access to higher education without the financial and cultural disadvantages of travelling long distance overseas. Before the Second World War, there were students from the Mainland

China and the British colony of Malaya, who were attracted by the University's quality of education. Graduates included engineers, doctors and teachers. They formed part of the intellectual elite who then became the foundations for Asia's modernization (ibid.). However, since travel to the Mainland China became restricted after 1949, and more and more students in Hong Kong began to seek higher education opportunities locally, the University gradually took on a stronger local emphasis. In 1961, the University already had more than 2,000 students, which was four times greater than twenty years ago. In brief, the main international characteristics of HKU which are derived from its British heritage include international student and staff compositions, a Western curriculum, use of English and a British system of governance and academic structure.

### **5.3.2 Perceived Components of the Normative Pillar**

When asked about the roles of norms, values, culture and traditions in affecting internationalisation in HKU, respondents mentioned the distinctive factors such as the use of English, the traditional compositions of international student and academic staff, the educational principles and values, and institutional autonomy as factors that can account for the internationalisation process in the University. Responses of interviewees are categorised in Table 20.

**Table 20: Perceived Normative Components for Internationalisation in HKU by Institutional Actors**

	Use of English	International Student Composition	International Academic Staff Composition	Educational Mission and Values		Institutional Autonomy	Recruitment of New Staff	Perceived Relationship between Normative Pillar & Internationalisation in HKU
				Whole-person Development	Experiential Learning			
<b>A</b>	*	*				*	*	- University is by nature an international entity and an international community.
<b>B</b>	*	*	*	*	*			- HKU was originally very international, with a deep international culture. - The University has been doing it (internationalisation).
<b>C</b>		*	*	*	*	*		- HKU is very international historically. - There is not much resistance towards internationalisation.
<b>D</b>				*			*	- HKU has historical advantage for internationalisation
<b>E</b>	*			*		*	*	- HKU was used to be a kind of colonial hub.
<b>F</b>		*		*	*			- It is the social responsibility of a university.

Source: From fieldwork interviews by the researcher.

### 5.3.2.1 Use of English

The use of English in HKU, as agreed by institutional actors being interviewed, is one of the major elements that facilitate the internationalisation of the University. Informant B said, “The use of English in the University gives an advantage on the creation of an international environment.” Informant A also admitted that since its early days. “English was used to be the campus language, not because it was the colonial language, but because it is *a common language*...The working language here is still English”.<sup>14</sup>

### 5.3.2.2 International Student and Staff Compositions

As English is a common language in the world, a *lingua franca* of the present time, resembling Latin in the medieval university, it helps the University to attract international students and staff to come and work, and thus strengthen the international characteristics of the University. As expressed by Informant E:

“Our niche is offering a window of China and Asia, you don’t learn the regional language, but *you can learn in English*. There are lots of people who like this. Most undergraduates in the wide world don’t speak Chinese, they speak English. We are the only part in China where you can come and get a proper education in English.”<sup>15</sup>

Therefore, respondents also agreed that international student and faculty compositions are genuine characteristics of the University.

“HKU used to have academic staff from different parts of the world, not just the UK and US. These staff respect different cultures and are used to integrate different cultures. Furthermore, we realize not only the staff but also students should come from different parts of the world.” (Informant B).

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<sup>14</sup> Italic by the researcher.

<sup>15</sup> Ditto.

In the interviews, the researcher noted that respondents attributed the use of English and the international compositions of students and staff to the history and tradition of HKU as it was once “the only British University in the Asian region” (Informant C), and “a university of the whole (British colonial) region” (Informant A). “*Historically*, HKU was quite international when you go back to 1920s until 1950s. It accepted a lot of students from the region.”<sup>16</sup>. Therefore, it was the “...*tradition* of the University and faculties that used to recruit students from all over the world. Faculties have an open attitude to this.” (Informant B).

### 5.3.2.3 Educational Principles and Values

Besides the language and international staff and student compositions, another element in relation to HKU’s internationalisation which is frequently cited in the interviews is the educational mission and values of the University. From the interviews, the values and educational beliefs which are stressed most in HKU are the ethos of “whole-person development” and “experiential learning”.

“...the educational mission and values of “*whole-person development*” of HKU encompass many elements, including global vision. It is an overarching guiding principle, which stresses individual development in all aspects, including integrity and moral education.” (Informant D).<sup>17</sup>

“The *experiential component* of going out to some of those countries, all valuable for students’ experience...gain general understanding of the world around them, strengthen the ability to understand behaviors and social regimes in other countries...develop interest in the development of other countries...enhance the

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<sup>16</sup> Italic by the researcher.

<sup>17</sup> Ditto.

ability to work in other cultures.” (Informant C).<sup>18</sup>

To illustrate the importance of these educational principles, interviewees quoted the implementation of “Global Citizenship Programme” in one faculty, which they believed is a concrete example of putting “whole-person development” and experiential learning into action.

“In our philosophy of education, we believe in “caring leaders with a global vision”. We hope our graduates can care for the society and have a global vision, so we put forward the concept of global citizenship... It is now not just an abstract concept, but we put it into concrete action. It becomes the guide of our action, which means, a guide for our curriculum. It is a mandatory course requirement to be fulfilled by students before graduation.” (Informant D).

Interviewees strongly believed that the global citizenship programme is beneficial to the personal growth of students because:

“It really changes them (the students) as human beings. When they come back, they are more self-confident and more open to the possibilities that the world can offer. Why do you do this? Just because of the values added to students. They are very high...The impact on the students is just great.” (Informant E).

Although less mentioned by the interviewees, it is also believed that HKU should prepare its students for their future careers. When Informant F talked about those experiential learning programmes in the University, he related them to the career needs of students, “Apart from *educational vision*, even back to the level of career needs, as the nature of jobs has now changed, students need to work with people from different countries.”<sup>19</sup>. Such emphasis on career needs and employability is very similar to the rationales underlying the Bologna Declaration in Europe, which calls for the establishment

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<sup>18</sup> Italic by the researcher.

<sup>19</sup> Ditto.

of a common “European higher education Area” by 2010 through the adoption of a common degree and credit system. In general, institutional actors in HKU regarded it is the role and social responsibility of the University to educate the young generation with correct values, which will in turn serve and improve the society.

“As an educator, if you think the thing is important and good for students, you will do it. It is *the social responsibility of a University* to do so. We are here to educate the next generation who will improve the society.”<sup>20</sup> (Informant F).

#### **5.3.2.4 Institutional Autonomy**

Finally, the last characteristic revealed by respondents in relation to the internationalisation activities in HKU is the freedom and autonomy that the University enjoys. Talking about research activities in Hong Kong, Informant A expressed that: “It is for the universities in Hong Kong to play themselves in the international arena.”. Concerning the overall internationalisation of the University, “That is still down to the universities to put and assign funding on that kind of things (internationalisation activities).” (Informant C), and “That means it depends on the university to do more in many ways.” (Informant E). All these interviewees seem to confirm that HKU is free to decide and take actions on its internationalisation activities to a very large extent, and institutional autonomy is a feature of the University.

#### **5.3.3 Interaction of the Normative Components**

After finding out the components of normative pillar in affecting the internationalisation in HKU, we now look at the interaction between them. From the above, it seems that the historical legacies of the University in terms of the use of English, the

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<sup>20</sup> Italic by the researcher.

international student and academic staff compositions, the orientation, approach, vision and mission of education, as well as the British tradition of university autonomy revealed in the historical analysis (Section 5.3.1) match well with those elements perceived by the interviewees in the empirical findings (Section 5.3.2) (see Table 21). But, for the western curriculum, it should be noted that what it means in the early days of the University, and the educational mission and values in the present days are not exactly the same thing. What they parallel and suggest being similar by the researcher are their orientations and approaches, not the exact contents. In HKU, both the old and new educational emphasis is very much influenced by the British idea of “liberal education” advocated by Cardinal J. H. Newman, who believed that the function of university education is the cultivation of intellect and production of "gentlemen" with regard to social, moral and spiritual developments (Newman, 1907).

**Table 21: A Match between the Actual and Perceived Components of the Normative Pillar which influence Internationalisation in HKU**

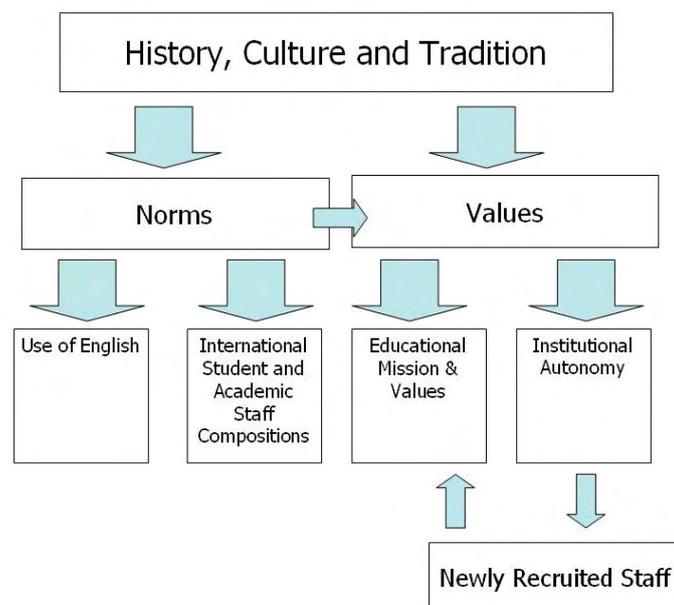
<b>Actual Normative Influences on Internationalisation in HKU (From Section 5.3.1)</b>	Use of English	International student composition	Non-local academic staff	A western curriculum	A British system of governance and academic structure
<b>Perceived Normative Influences on Internationalisation in HKU (From Table 20)</b>	Use of English	International student composition	International academic staff composition	Educational mission and values: 1. Whole-person development 2. Experiential learning	Institutional Autonomy

Source: By combining section 5.3.1 and Table 20.

According to the informants, these normative components are related to the historical

role and function of HKU (Diagram 7). Due to its role as a “colonial hub” (Informant E), HKU was set up to serve the whole British colonial region in Asia. It was thus originally “a very international university, with a deep international culture.” (Informant B). Since its early days, the University already attracted both local students and students from around Asia and used English as the working language in campus. Moreover, because of the lack of local candidates and the linkages with the UK, most of the faculty came from outside Hong Kong, especially from the UK. To certain extent, such phenomenon is still prevalent in today’s faculty composition. For example, one of the institutional actors (Informant C) in this study is a British national from the UK who came to work in the University nearly thirty years ago. He told the researcher that “historically, when I was recruited, all the recruitment in my time was done through the Commonwealth Association in London.”. Over times, these three aspects (the use of English, international student and staff compositions) gradually form the norms of HKU.

**Diagram 7: Interaction of Normative Components in the Formation of Culture and Tradition at HKU**



Concerning the approach and orientation in education and university governance in HKU, they are used to be westernised. For example, hall life in HKU is a characteristic “inherited from the colleges in Oxford and Cambridge” (Informant A), and the concept of service learning (a component of experiential learning) was imported from the USA (Informant F). Similarly, the high degree of institutional autonomy enjoyed by the universities in Hong Kong is inherited from the British tradition. With the passage of times, these values evolve into the culture and tradition of the University.

Besides the above, one special point is worth mentioning in this study. It is discovered from the interviews that in order to implement the concept of “whole-person development” and “service learning” successfully, the University has recently employed and brought in people with relevant backgrounds or approaches. For example, the recruitment of the former Chief Executive from Oxfam can be related to the successful implementation of the service learning programme.

“...because three years ago, we recruited and appointed a new staff, the Director of Student Development, to launch programmes on service learning. He had been the Chief Executive of Oxfam in Hong Kong and thus has extensive experience in organizing service programmes.” (Informant A).

In another occasion, when asked about why he entered the University, Informant D said that,

“Because I have a similar vision with the Dean...The concept of global citizenship was brought into the Faculty by the Dean two years ago when he came to the University. It is aimed to enhance the global vision of students. His vision is similar to mine.”

These two incidents indicate that this “new blood” may not only has a vision similar to the University, but also bring in new values and norms in the University, which will gradually evolve into a new kind of culture and tradition. In brief, the historical legacies,

culture and tradition in relation to the use of English, the international student and academic staff compositions, the high degree of institutional autonomy and the educational mission and values constitute the norms and values which facilitate the internationalisation process of the University.

### **5.3.4 The Perceived Relationship Between the Normative Pillar and Changes of Internationalisation Activities in HKU**

After revealing that history, culture, tradition, norms and values are part of the forces in the internationalisation process of HKU, we now discuss how important they are. The essence is expressed by Informant B,

“We are originally a very international university; with a deep international culture... We don’t do something different suddenly. *On top of our culture, we are now working more deeply.*”<sup>21</sup>

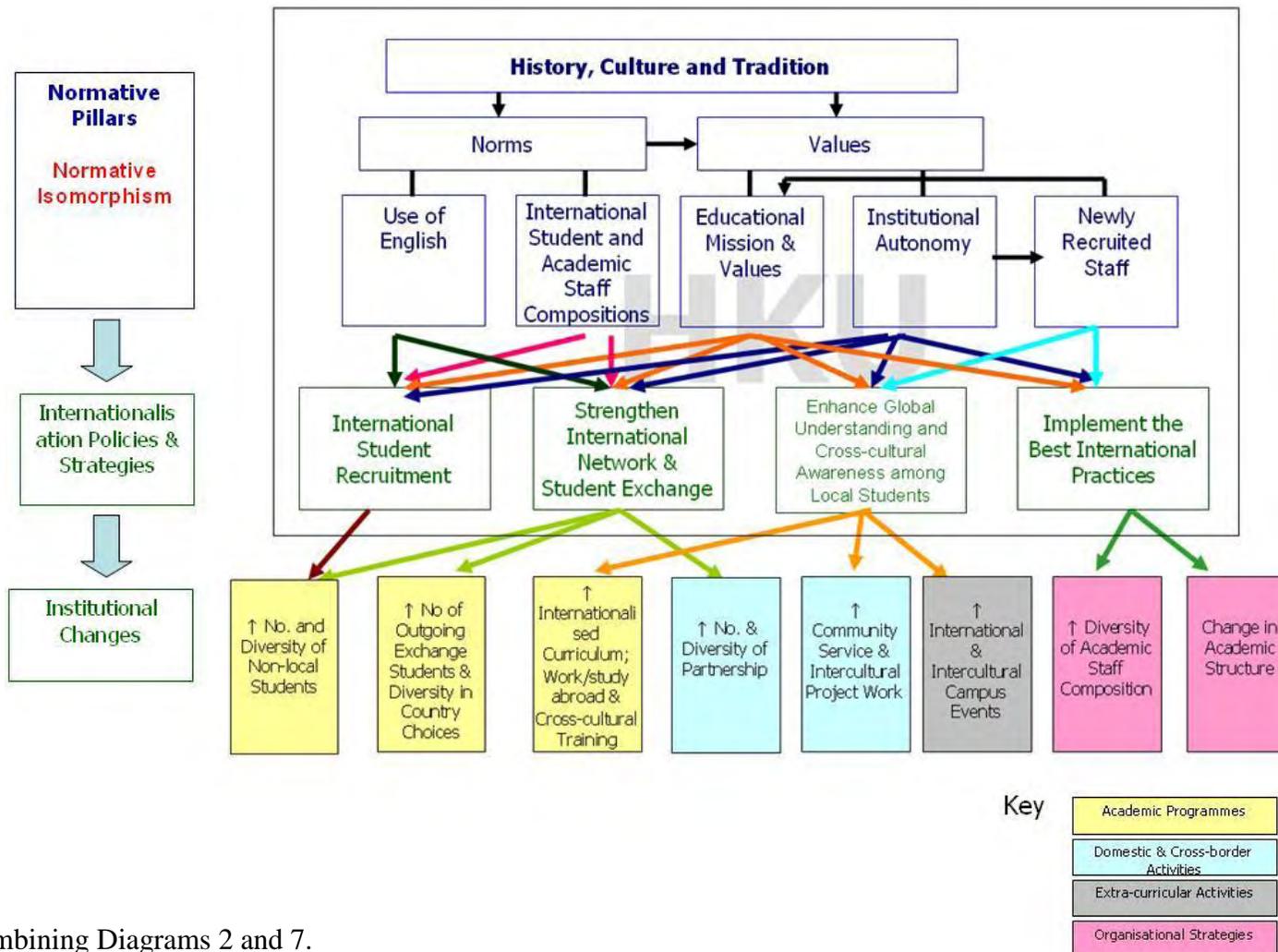
Easily noted, the existence of international culture and tradition has made internationalisation a genuine characteristic of the University. It is nothing against its values in educating the youth for their personal development, career needs and for serving the society. As Informant C expressed, “In general, it is *hard to find any resistance...* to the concept of internationalisation, I don’t think I have ever come across a serious argument against it.”<sup>22</sup>. The values, norms, culture and tradition on internationalisation in the past have greatly facilitated the international process at present and help to account for the changes in internationalisation activities of the University. In order to depict the relationship between the normative components and changes of internationalisation activities in HKU more clearly, Diagram 8 is constructed to map out their associations

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<sup>21</sup> Italic by the researcher.

<sup>22</sup> Ditto.

**Diagram 8: Perceived Relationship between the Normative Pillar and Changes in Internationalisation Activities of HKU**



Source: By combining Diagrams 2 and 7.

In term of international student recruitment and strengthening of international networks and student exchange, it can be observed that the use of English, the tradition of having international students and academic staff, the educational mission and values, as well as the autonomy enjoyed by the University in setting its own policy and direction for internationalisation act to facilitate the University in launching its non-student recruitment scheme and widening the number and diversity of its partnership. As a result, there are now more non-local students in the campus, more students going out for exchange, and more partners established in providing more country choices for student exchange. Similarly, the core values on education, the high degree of institutional autonomy and recruitment of new staff enables the University to strengthen its international dimension in curriculum and benchmark itself against the best international practices from other universities. These result in the increase of international elements in curriculum, the development of more student-initiated community service and intercultural project works, more international and inter-cultural campus events, as well as the increase in the diversity of academic staff composition and changes fostered in the University's academic structure.

### **5.3.5 Summary and Analysis**

This section shows that history, culture, traditions, norms and values are important normative forces in the internationalisation process of HKU. Established as a British colonial University in Asia, HKU has incorporated a lot of western characteristics, such as the use of English, the spirit of institutional autonomy, an open attitude to non-local recruitment and an orientation to incorporate international dimensions in its educational philosophy and curriculum. These historical legacies form the norms and values of the University. Moreover, the University in recent years has recruited some new staff who have a vision and mission matching the overall development direction of the University.

Their presence in the University can be interpreted partly as a consolidation of the existing values and norms, and partly as an advocate of some new or more advanced ideologies, which will then form new values, norms, culture and tradition. These normative elements are important in the internationalisation of HKU as institutional players can use them as screening mechanisms for selecting government policies, external norms and values into the University and thus induce the changes witnessed in recent years. In accordance with the institutional theory, it can be concluded that normative isomorphism exists in influencing the internationalisation of HKU. The socio-cultural construction of HKU has a prominent role in its internationalisation process. The interplay of the historical functions and cultural specifics of HKU form the normative mechanism which foster changes and internationalisation of the University.

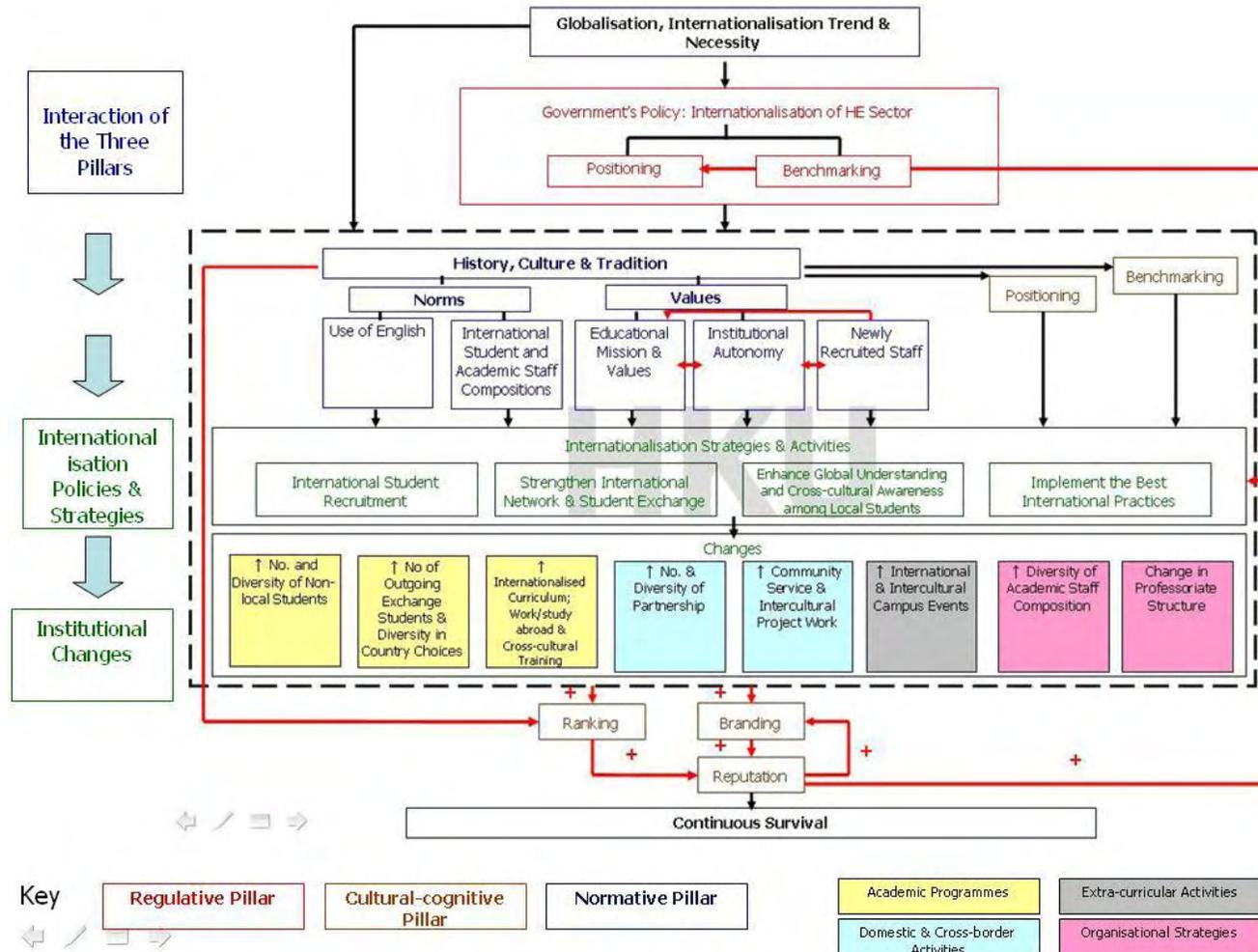
#### **5.4 The Three Pillars and Their Interaction**

After looking at each of the pillar, this section will examine their interaction and strength in influencing internationalisation activities in HKU. By combining the findings in the previous sections, Diagram 9 is constructed. It depicts that the changes in the internationalisation activities in HKU originate from two sources. In one way, internationalisation is an intrinsic process of change in university. As a social institution with international orientation, university initiates to internationalise itself as a result of its values, norms, culture and tradition on internationalisation (the normative pillar). In another, internationalisation is a means in response to globalisation, the trend of internationalisation and economic needs of society. While the government designs policies and strategies for internationalisation (the regulative pillar) of the whole higher education sector in Hong Kong, HKU also makes its own strategic plan for internationalisation. Moreover, University is not a passive receiver and mere implementer of government

policies. When face with external demands and changes in the environment, institutional players judge them against the normative criteria of the institution, which act together as a screening mechanism to interpret and understand those changes, and guide the responses of the University in the changing environment. Only when external stimuli match with the values, norms and culture of the university that they will have a high chance to become influential and foster changes. Therefore, when government strengthened the internationalisation emphasis and policies of the higher education sector, HKU has not much resistance to it, despite some negative comments on its lack of policy intensity. It is partly because the University is already in the process of internationalisation according to its own international nature and culture, and partly because institutional players find a match between such internationalisation policies and the University's existing educational values and philosophies, in particular, as both policies put focus on positioning and benchmarking (the cultural-cognitive pillar).

For example, with a view to compete with Singapore and Malaysia, the positioning strategy (the cultural-cognitive pillar) put forward by government on turning the higher education sector in Hong Kong into an education hub encourages universities to increase their recruitment of non-local students and send out more students for exchange. It also urges universities to sharpen the focus of their new curricula under the "334 Reform" on themes of "whole-person development" and a student-centered learning experience approach (the regulative and normative pillar). These policies match with HKU's tradition as an international university, its norms of recruiting non-local students, and its education philosophy of "whole-person development" and "experiential learning" (the normative pillar). Moreover, the use of English in teaching activities and the high proportion of academic staff capable of teaching in English make the realization of these aims possible.

**Diagram 9: Interaction of the Regulative, Cultural-cognitive and Normative Pillars and Internationalisation in HKU**



To be more concrete, we can look at the implementation of the brand new “Global Citizenship Programme” in the Faculty of Social Sciences since 2008. Being requested as part of the graduation requirement, the Programme stresses the out-of-Hong Kong experience of students so as to enhance their global vision under the ethos of “whole-person development” and “experiential learning”. Such ethos are similar to the core themes of the new “334 Reform” (whole-person development, a student-centered learning experience approach and an integrated and broadened curriculum) advocated by government. Since the educational philosophies and emphases on both sides of the University and government coincide with each other, the University is very willing to strengthen the international dimension in its new curriculum in response to government policy. In this sense, academic values and cultural rationales mentioned by van der Wende (2002) are revealed to be equally important in the internationalisation of HKU, and the “Global Citizenship Programme” can be viewed as an initial step in the preparation for the new curriculum, which concerns the interaction of all three pillars (the regulative, normative and cultural-cognitive).

Similarly, the advocate of benchmarking by government (the regulative and cultural-cognitive pillars) in local higher education institutions mirror the actual practices of the University, which is vigilantly looking for the best practices around the world, learn from them and implement them. A large part of this benchmarking, such as the aim of sending 100% students abroad for out-of-Hong Kong experiences and the borrowing of the “service learning” concept is to strengthen the ethos of whole-development and global vision of HKU (the normative pillar), not to mention the benchmarking against those universities in U21 Consortium for its branding strategy (the cultural-cognitive pillar). All these best practices are in line not only with government’s intention, but also the values,

norms and aims of the University. By stressing such positioning and benchmarking, internationalisation strategies and activities in the University are strengthened and lead to changes in the diversity and number of non-local students, international partnerships, student exchange, international and intercultural campus events, community service and intercultural project, and the international dimension in curriculum. As a result, the University moves closer towards the aim of consolidating itself as an international university of an Asia's educational hub. Branding improves and reputation increases. Equally, the high international ranking which the University has achieved due to its past internationalisation record, history and tradition further strengthens its reputation. With reputation, the University has more advantages to engage in additional internationalisation activities and thus has a better position to survive. More than the University itself, internationalisation in HKU also serves as a strategy to improve the international competitiveness of the local higher education sector and the city-state of Hong Kong.

## **5.5 Summary**

This chapter clearly demonstrates and explains the role of the coercive, mimetic and normative forces in the internationalisation of HKU. It shows that internationalisation in HKU partly grows out of its role and tradition as an international social institution and partly as a response to global trend. In either way, survival is the ultimate aim which accounts for the changes in the internationalisation activities of HKU. Therefore, the assumption and prediction in the institutional theory, which suggests that changes in the international activities of HKU is the result of changes in its three pillars, are largely proved and confirmed in the case of HKU. Moreover, the research shows that academic, cultural, political and economic rationales are all underlying the internationalisation of HKU in improving its quality of education, enhancing cross-cultural understanding of its

students and strengthening the economic competitiveness and international position of the institution and the city in the international arena (van der Wende, 2002).

Despite internationalisation is an active phenomena in HKU, it should be noted that its nature today is not exactly the same as it was in its early days. At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, HKU was a British colonial university in the Asian region. It was obliged to take in students from the nearby British colonies (such as Malaya), used English in teaching activities and followed the British tradition in all aspects. Moreover, “international mobility” of students at that time did not occur on national levels between countries, but between colonies of the British master. So internationalisation in HKU in the past was similar to that of the medieval universities, which is only “inter-territorial” in nature (Neave, 2001). Today, internationalisation in HKU is of a different kind. It can set its own positioning and branding strategy by exercising its institutional autonomy as an independent entity. Of course, it is undeniable that, due to the new political reality after the return of sovereignty to China, it is government’s aim to strengthen the relationship between Hong Kong and China, and make Hong Kong a window to and of China. Therefore, a trend in the increase of students and academic staff coming from Mainland China, and more local students going to Mainland for exchange and internship is observed in HKU. Though HKU still has to serve a political function similar to what it was during the British regime, it is different today that both the government and higher education institutions in Hong Kong are entitled to make its own decisions and policies for internationalisation. The Basic Law (HKSAR, 2009a) which governs the relationship between Hong Kong and China guarantees that Hong Kong is a special administrative region with a high degree of autonomy (Article 2). Both the government and higher education institutions in Hong Kong are free to formulate polices for their own

development.

“On the basis of the previous educational system, the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region shall, formulate policies on the development and improvement of education, including policies regarding the educational system and its administration, the language of instruction, the allocation of funds, the examination system, the system of academic awards and the recognition of educational qualifications.” (Article 136).

“Educational institutions of all kinds may *retain their autonomy and enjoy academic freedom*. They may continue to recruit staff and use teaching materials from outside the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region.”<sup>23</sup> (Article 137).

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<sup>23</sup> Italic by the researcher.

## **Chapter 6: Conclusion**

This final chapter provides a summary on the major findings of the research so as to answer the research questions set in Chapter One. After answering the research questions, it also presents the significance, limitations and recommendations of this research.

### **6.1 Major Findings**

#### **6.1.1 Sub-question 1: How can internationalisation activities in HKU be characterised?**

Findings on internationalisation activities in HKU are displayed in chapter four. It is founded out that its main internationalisation activities cover one-third of the programme strategies categorised by Knight (2005). They fall in three main areas: academic programmes, domestic and cross-border activities, and extra-curricular activities. Respondents agreed that non-local student recruitment, strengthening of international networks and student exchange, incorporating international dimension in the curriculum with work/study abroad and cross-cultural training elements, launching of more community service and international project works (especially those initiated and carried out by students), and international and intercultural events, as well as the implementation of the best international practices are the main internationalisation strategies in HKU. Other less significant international strategies include joint/double degree programmes, area or thematic studies, offerings of foreign language study (academic programmes); customized education and training programmes for international partners and clients, cross-delivery of educational programmes, contract-based training and research, and student clubs and associations (domestic and cross-border activities); peer support groups and programmes (extra-curricular activities); international research partners in academic or

other sectors, international research agreement, and joint research projects and publications (research & scholarly collaboration); and increasing international academic staff composition, change in professoriate structure and provision of more supporting infrastructures for internationalisation (other organisational strategies for internationalisation).

### **6.1.2 Sub-question 2: Are there any changes in the internationalisation activities of HKU in recent years?**

The research shows that HKU has experienced obvious quantitative and qualitative changes in its internationalisation activities in recent years. The most significant ones are the increases in number and diversity of non-local students recruited, student exchange programme, and increasing international dimension (with work/study abroad and cross-cultural training elements) in the curriculum. Over half of the interviewees also reported there is an increasing number and diversity in community service and intercultural project works carried out by students, international linkages, partnerships and networks, as well as international and intercultural campus events. Moreover, it is obvious to see the University is now more active in benchmarking and learning some good practices from other universities.

### **6.1.3 Sub-question 3: Do government policies contribute to the changes in internationalisation activities?**

In chapter five, it is found out from policy review and document analysis that there is a good match between government policies on internationalisation of higher education sector in Hong Kong and the actual internationalisation policies and strategies in HKU. Both cover the areas of non-local student recruitment, student exchange, building up of

international networks and partnership, international dimension in curriculum and benchmarking of the best practices. However, later interviews with key institutional players in the University revealed that a discrepancy exist between these documentary finding and empirical finding. During the interviews, most respondents rejected to accept any strong impact of government policies on the current internationalisation process in HKU. Looking for the reason, it is discovered that such discrepancy is mainly due to the dissatisfaction of respondents towards the existing government policies. Most of them commented the government lacks a clear policy direction and does not provide enough funding for universities to internationalise.

Despite its insufficient funding and policy incentive, government of Hong Kong has been supportive for the internationalisation activities in local universities. It encourages them to benchmark themselves against the best practices in the world and build up Hong Kong into an education hub in Asia. In this research, it is also interesting to find out that institutional actors in HKU are constructive advisors for government. More than just being cynical and critical towards government policies, they are willing to make suggestions for government to improve, especially on how to better position Hong Kong and make a brand for its higher education sector. We can see from here that more than a passive receiver of government's policies, university is an active agent in fostering changes not just for itself but for society. Therefore, the findings largely confirm that government policy and the regulative pillar, as a coercive force, stipulated in the institutional theory are important and relevant for the internationalisation process of HKU.

#### **6.1.4 Sub-question 4: What are the institutional actors' perceptions about the mechanisms that stimulate internationalisation in HKU?**

Other than government policy, institutional actors also indicate that norm, values,

culture, history, positioning strategy and benchmarking practices are stimulating internationalisation in HKU. When examine closer into the government policies and HKU's strategies on internationalisation, positioning and benchmarking are noted as the main underlying rationales. In terms of positioning, HKU is aspired to establish itself with the brand as "a window of China" and an international university of an "education hub" in Asia. To consolidate such a brand, HKU decides to learn and model good practices from other top universities in the world through benchmarking. For example, it observes and learns the ways those universities in the U21 Consortium established their brands, the policy of sending all students abroad for overseas experience in Harvard, the application of the "service learning" concept in the USA and the provision of "developmental aid" to developing countries in Cambridge. It is not to deny that "mimicking the best for the best" is governing the internationalisation process in HKU. With a good brand, HKU can then enhance its reputation. In reverse, reputation also consolidates the brand of HKU.

Besides branding, ranking is another means for establishing the University's reputation. HKU has a high rank on the "Times Higher Education - QS World University Rankings" in the past few years. Such reputation helps HKU to build up its internationalisation partnership and networks for student exchange or research, and greatly facilitates its internationalisation activities which result in those changes observed in recent years. In return, increasing internationalisation activities in HKU further strengthens its position, its brand and reputation, which all leads to a deeper and wider scope of internationalisation process. The research also reveals that such positioning, branding and benchmarking are linked to the global trend and survival of the University. In response to the trend of internationalisation and globalisation, internationalisation becomes a "rule of the game". It is a need and a necessity for HKU to join the trend; if not, it will be

“excluded from the international community” (Informant A). To do so, policy referencing, modeling and learning are important tools. In this way, the role of cognitive-cultural pillar and its mimetic force on internationalisation of higher education institution assumed in chapter one based on the institutional theory is strongly supported in the case of HKU.

Findings in chapter five also proved that history, culture, tradition, values and norms are perceived by institutional actors as important mechanisms for the internationalisation in HKU. According to the respondents, university is an international entity by itself and thus internationalisation is an intrinsic and inherent characteristic and process in any university. On top of it, internationalisation in HKU is related to its unique history, role and function in its early days. As a British colony, this first university in Hong Kong was a British university serving the whole Asian region under the British regime in the early part of the twentieth century. Therefore, it used to attract students from across the geographical border, such as the Malaya, to study here. And most of the academic staff was non-local. With the aims of the colonial master in mind, the University followed the British tradition in its governance, curriculum and medium of instruction. Over time, such historical legacies form the norm, culture and tradition of the University, making it “very international in nature”. Moreover, it is interesting to find out in this research that the University in recent years has recruited some new staff to launch and implement some new programmes, such as the “Global Citizenship Programme” and service learning programmes. Recruitment of these new people can strengthen the existing educational philosophy and values and put them into actual practices. All these history, culture, tradition and personnel show that the normative pillar is at work in the internationalisation process of HKU as well.

### **6.1.5 Main Question 1: What are the mechanisms underlying internationalisation in higher education institutions?**

From the above, it is shown that government policies, history, culture, tradition, norms, values, new staff, as well as positioning strategy, benchmarking practices, branding, ranking and reputation are all important forces underlying internationalisation at HKU. The research supports the institutional theory that regulative, cultural-cognitive and normative pillars are the main mechanisms inducing internationalisation in higher education institutions. They operate according to a combination of coercive, normative and mimetic forces.

### **6.1.6 Main Question 2: How does university respond to internationalisation?**

The research shows that it is by the interaction and combination of the three pillars of institutional theory that university responds to internationalisation in higher education. On the one hand, internationalisation is a natural process of change in university, which is linked to its international nature and culture (normative pillar). Activities in university are inherently international; knowledge discovery and exchange in different disciplines stretches beyond institutional and geographical boundaries. On the other, in face of globalisation, international trend and necessity, university has to make use of internationalisation as a means to respond. It looks to relevant government policies for direction and funding (regulative pillar), and searches for some good practices in the world to learn and model from them, so as to establish its own position, brand and reputation (the cultural-cognitive pillar). However, university is neither a passive receiver of government policies nor a pure imitator. Institutional players can initiate internationalisation on their own for the sake of benefits of its students, the institution and the society. They judge the rationales and motives of external policies and practices against the values, norms, culture

and tradition of the institution (the normative pillar), which altogether act as a screening mechanism to interpret and understand the changes, and guide the responses of university in the changing environment.

## **6.2 Significance of the Research**

By focusing on a case study of HKU in understanding the mechanisms of internationalisation and organisational change in higher education institution, this research is significant in four ways. It serves as a test of the institutional theory, a demonstration of conducting qualitative research, a support of the institutional perspective on internationalisation in higher education, and a reference point of internationalisation in higher education for other countries.

First, this research tests the institutional theory in the context of higher education and a city in the East. Findings support the assumption of institutional theory that organisational changes come from a combination of factors, such as the coercive, normative and mimetic forces of the regulative, normative and cultural-cognitive pillars. Institutional actors are not pure economic man as in the classical economic theory. Though modeling, benchmarking and mimicking are not uncommon in higher education institutions, decisions to apply them in a local setting are usually bounded by context, such as history, culture, norms and tradition, and involve value judgment. It is also the same for government policies which are seldom directly implemented in higher education institutions without any screening by institutional actors. In this sense, rationality is bounded. This research adds contents and substances to the institutional theory in explaining the changes of internationalisation in higher education institutions.

Second, this study provides a step-by-step illustration of conducting qualitative

research. The whole research process, from the literature review, to the construction of theoretical framework, deduction of assumptions, execution of fieldwork (interviews, document and policy reviews) and data analysis, is clearly described. Different types of descriptive and explanative displays are fully used to make analysis and draw up conclusions. It is a good case to demonstrate the process of conducting qualitative research from a deductive-inductive approach.

Third, by focusing on one university as a case study, the research provides an institutional perspective on looking at the dynamics of internationalisation, its changes and the underlying mechanisms. It reveals that internationalisation is both a means (to respond to external demands and pressures) and an end (to facilitate knowledge discovery and dissemination) in higher education institutions. In addition, the use of interviews with institutional actors can bring an insider's view on the process and rationales of internationalisation to readers, which may not be achieved by document and policy analyses alone. Through the thick description, readers can feel the context themselves in understanding the reasons and mechanisms of internationalisation in HKU. Speaking in another way, the effect of the interplay between the environment and internal dynamic of the University on organisational changes becomes more vividly sensed by the readers.

Finally, the strength of qualitative research is its "theoretical generalisation". This research has unraveled the "secrete" of internationalisation of a higher education institution. It uses HKU as a case study to demonstrate the mechanisms of its internationalisation process, and shows how an organisation responds to changes in the environment. It contributes to building up original empirical studies on research of internationalisation in higher education, and forms part of the repertoires of the indigenous higher education study in Hong Kong and China. Moreover, the story of HKU's success on

internationalisation can serve as a reference point and example for other local institutions which share the same geo-political and cultural context; other colonial universities in the world, which are determined to establish themselves in the international arena by building on their historical legacies, cultures and traditions; and other universities in China and Asia, which are eager to become internationalised and strengthen their connection with the other parts of the world. To all these universities, HKU becomes “a kind of recipe” for them. In serving as a model for other Chinese universities, HKU also fulfils the expectation of becoming “a window of China” for learning about the internationalisation process in the larger world. Of course, it has to be reminded that culture and context have to be taken into consideration in any kind of policy referencing and learning, especially this research has only indicated the association between the three pillars and changes. Instead of any direct one-to-one causal relationship between the mechanisms, changes and success, each university has unique developmental path due to its history, culture and tradition.

### **6.3 Limitations of the Research Design**

This research adopts a qualitative approach using case study and interviews as the main research and data collection methods. However, due to the limit of time and resources, only one case was used and six interviews were made. Respondents who agreed to be interviewed may be people who are more willing to express themselves, more engaged in the internationalisation process and more involved in promoting the public image of the University. As a result, the sample may not be fully representative of the whole population. Moreover, interviewees are free to discuss the topics according to their own knowledge and opinions; quality of the answers in this research depends very much on the eloquence and insight of the interviewees. Some may intentionally or unintentionally make up a good image of the University by telling the researcher, what she wants to know. As a result,

control on data quality was difficult and “interviewer effect” may exist. Generalisability of the results is thus limited. The study can most be transferred to understand cases with similar situations and contexts.

#### **6.4 Recommendations**

Limited by the time and resources, the single case and small number of respondents in this study may not provide a complete picture of the process of internationalisation in HKU and higher education institutions in general. Therefore, for future research, it is recommended that more interviewees within the same institution and more cases in the same or different geographical locations with different histories, rankings or missions can be included. Within the same institution, more interviewees from different faculties, levels of hierarchy and even students can be added to the sample. They may provide more diverse views on the internationalisation activities and changes in the University. For example, interviewees in the departments may better reveal the importance and changes of research activities related to internationalisation, since research is more likely to be carried out at the basic or individual levels. By widening the sample across different levels and faculties, it may discover a wider variation of rationales and changes of internationalisation, particularly the relationship between research and internationalisation which has not been the focus of the present study. Furthermore, other local higher education institutions in Hong Kong can be added to reveal and confirm the impact of local context and government policies in the changes of internationalisation in Hong Kong.

Since HKU was once a colonial university with a very unique history and enjoys a high international ranking, it would also be interesting to extend the research to other different cases to see how universities which do not have the same history and ranking react to changes in the environment and to internationalise. It is expected that universities

which have different histories, ages and geographical locations would not necessarily be in the same path or pace of internationalisation as HKU does. They may move faster or slower. The larger sample and cases can provide better control and comparison on the factors and mechanisms that influence internationalisation, and thus help to consolidate and enrich the institutional theory further.

## **6.5 Conclusion**

University, being one of the oldest social institutions in the world, is a mystery. A lot of scholars and researchers are devoted on uncovering the secret behind its long life since its first appearance nearly ten centuries ago. The mechanisms for its continuous survival by keeping its tradition while incorporating changes at the same time is always a special topic for research. In this study, HKU is used as a case study to demonstrate why and how university changes and survives in its process of internationalisation.

This research reveals that internationalisation is taking place actively and rigorously in HKU, because of its genuine international orientation of being a university in itself and the pressures and demands from outside the university. In face of internationalisation trend, the University has to take advantage of its values, norms, culture and tradition on internationalisation and use them as criteria to select the most suitable government policies in developing its internationalisation strategies and policies. It shows that HKU's internationalisation process is the result of the combination of coercive, normative and mimetic forces which change its three pillars (the regulative, normative and cultural-cognitive pillars) as suggested in the institutional theory. This research has uncovered why and how HKU engages in internationalisation and fosters changes; internationalisation is not only a means but also an end. In either way, HKU's high international ranking and survival for nearly 100 years in history have proved the

transplant of this century-old social institution from the West in Hong Kong is a success. It can also be concluded from this research that “internationalisation” has become part of the identity of the University.

In fact, more than a direct and historical transplant of the western origin, HKU today is moving towards its own direction of change with local characteristics and uniqueness. It is aspired and determined to establish its brand and identity as an international university, not only to become top on ranking, but also part of an education hub in Asia and a window to China. In sum, the internationalisation process of HKU mirrors the reality of Hong Kong as a place where the West meets the East and a successful city in the internationalisation arena.

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## **Appendix 1: Interview Guide**

1. What are the main internationalisation activities in HKU?
2. Why does the University engage in these internationalisation activities? What are the reasons behind?
3. What are the major trends of internationalisation activities in your opinion?
4. Do you see any changes in the internationalisation activities in the past 10 years? Why do these happen and go in the way you mentioned?
5. Does government policy affect the internationalisation activities in the University? If yes, how?
6. Are there any norms and values (formal and informal) that guide the internationalisation activities in the University? If yes, can you tell me some of them? Do you have any idea about the way these norms and values are created?
7. Do you think there are already some traditions of internationalisation in HKU?
8. How does the University perceive the internationalisation activities in other universities (both local and international)? Are there any processes which influence the way internationalisation activities being defined in HKU?
9. How do you think about the internationalisation activities in the University?
10. Why are you interested in the internationalisation process of the University?
11. What are you doing to enhance the internationalisation of HKU?
12. Can you tell me something about:

- Your education background (field and place of study)?
- What professional networks or international organisations do you join?
- A brief career record before joining HKU
- The reason you join HKU and take up tasks on internationalisation in the University

## Appendix 2: Tables

**Table 1: Degree-awarding Higher Education Institutions in Hong Kong**

<b>Names of Institutions</b>	<b>Founding Year</b>	<b>Year of Granting University Status</b>	<b>Source of Funding</b>
City University of Hong Kong	1984	1994	UGC-funded
Hong Kong Baptist University	1956	1994	UGC-funded
Lingnan University	1967	1999	UGC-funded
The Chinese University of Hong Kong	1963	Since establishment	UGC-funded
The Hong Kong Institute of Education	1994	Not applicable	UGC-funded
The Hong Kong Polytechnic University	1972	1994	UGC-funded
The Hong Kong University of Science and Technology	1991	Since establishment	UGC-funded
The University of Hong Kong	1911	Since establishment	UGC-funded
Chu Hai College of Higher Education	1949	Not applicable	Self financing
Hong Kong Shue Yan University	1971	2006	Self financing
The Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts	1984	Not applicable	Publicly funded
The Open University of Hong Kong	1989	1997	Self financing

Source: HKSAR, 1997a.

**Table 2: Number of UGC-funded Headcount Enrollment (Full-time)**

	<b>2004/05</b>	<b>2005/06</b>	<b>2006/07</b>	<b>2007/08</b>
Undergraduate	8,908	9,215	9,663	9,976
Taught Postgraduate	751	657	624	638
Research Postgraduate (Master of Philosophy)	517	591	624	632
Research Postgraduate (Doctor of Philosophy)	994	1,057	1,109	1,163
<b>Total</b>	<b>11,170</b>	<b>11,520</b>	<b>12,020</b>	<b>12,409</b>

Source: Quick Stats, HKU.

**Table 3: Programme Strategies for Internationalisation of Higher Education Institutions**

Programme Activities	Examples
Academic programmes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Student exchange programmes</li> <li>- Foreign language study</li> <li>- Internationalised curricula</li> <li>- Area or thematic studies</li> <li>- Work/study abroad</li> <li>- International students</li> <li>- Teaching/Learning process</li> <li>- Joint/double degree programmes</li> <li>- Cross-cultural training</li> <li>- Visiting lectures and scholars</li> <li>- <u>Links between academic programmes and other strategies</u></li> </ul>
Research and scholarly collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Area and theme centres</li> <li>- Joint research projects and publications</li> <li>- International conferences and seminars</li> <li>- International research agreement</li> <li>- Research exchange programmes</li> <li>- <u>International research partners in academic or other sectors</u></li> </ul>
Domestic and cross-border activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <u>Community-based partnerships with NGOs or public/private sector groups</u></li> <li>- Community service and intercultural project work</li> <li>- Customized education and training programmes for international partners and clients</li> <li>- Cross-delivery of educational programmes</li> <li>- International development assistance project (commercial and non-commercial)</li> <li>- International linkages, partnerships and networks</li> <li>- Contract-based training and research programmes and services</li> <li>- Alumni abroad programmes</li> <li>- Student clubs and associations</li> </ul>
Extra-curricular activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- International and intercultural campus events</li> <li>- Liaison with community-based cultural and ethnic groups</li> <li>- Peer support groups and programmes</li> </ul>

Source: Knight (2005).

**Table 7: Internationalisation Activities of HKU**

	Academic Programmes							Research & Scholarly Collaboration		Domestic & Cross-border Activities							Extra-Curricular Activities		Others			
	International Students	Student Exchange Programmes	Joint/Double Degree Programmes	Work/Study Abroad	Area or Thematic Studies	Internationalised Curricula	Foreign Language Study	Cross-cultural Training	International Research partners in Academic or Other Sectors	International Research Agreement	Joint Research Projects and Publications	Community Service and Intercultural Project Work	Customized Education & Training Programmes for Intl partners and Clients	Cross-delivery of Educational Programmes	International Linkages, Partnerships and Networks	Contract-based Training & Research Programmes and Services	Student Clubs and Associations	International and Intercultural Campus Events	Peer Support Groups & Programmes	International Academic Staff Composition	Supporting Infrastructures	Change in Professoriate Structure
A	*	*	*			*	*				*	*		*	*	*	*		*	*	*	*
B	*	*				*	*							*			*		*	*	*	
C	*	*		*		*	*	*	*	*	*						*		*	*	*	
D	*	*		*		*	*			*	*			*					*	*	*	
E	*	*	*	*		*	*							*			*		*	*	*	
F	*	*		*	*	*	*				*					*	*		*	*	*	
Other													*		*			*				
Sources																						

**Table 10: HKU's Outreach Degree Programmes**

<b>Names of Programmes</b>	<b>No. of Enrolments</b>
HKU Master of Business Administration (International) Programme in Shanghai	629
HKU Master of Finance Programme in Shenzhen	211
HKU Master of Science in Construction Project Management Programme in Chongqing	24
HKU Master of Science in Real Estate Programme in Chongqing	38
HKU Master of Social Service Management Programme in Shanghai	9
HKU Master of Social Work Programme in Shanghai	13
HKU Master of Dental Surgery Programme in Beijing	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>932</b>

Source: Quick Stats, HKU.

**Table 11: Joint Research Laboratories**

	<b>2004/05</b>	<b>2005/06</b>	<b>2006/07</b>	<b>2007/08</b>
<b>China</b>				
Beijing	1	1	1	0
Guangzhou	0	2	2	1
Shanghai	3	5	5	3
Shenzhen	2	2	2	2
<b>Rest of the World</b>				
UK	0	1	1	1
USA	5	3	3	3
Canada	1	1	0	0
Australia	2	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>10</b>

Source: Quick Stats, HKU.

**Table 13: A Match of the Strategic Plan & Policies with Actual Strategies for Internationalisation in HKU**

Theme: Fostering Internationalisation			
<u>Recruit international students:</u>  1. Launched the “Admission of Undergraduate Students from the Mainland Scheme”  2. Extended the “Admission of Undergraduate Students from the Mainland Scheme” to cover students not supported by scholarships  3. Set up the Global Lounge	<u>Strengthen international networks and alliances to facilitate student movement, faculty development, and exchange programmes:</u>  1. Launched “HKU Worldwide Student Exchange Programme for Undergraduate Students”  2. Launched “HKU Worldwide China Programme”  3. Set up the Global Lounge	<u>Enhance global understanding and cross-cultural awareness among local students:</u>  1. Agreed to incorporate internationalism in the 2012 new curriculum  2. Launched the “Global Citizenship Programme” in Faculty of Social Sciences in 2008	<u>Recognise and implement the best international practices:</u>  1. Increased diversity of academic staff composition  2. Change in professoriate structure

Source: Abstract from sections 4.1 and 4.2.

**Table 14: Percentage of Non-local Student Recruitment to Total Student Number**

	Early 1990s	1998/99	2005/06	2008/09
<b>Undergraduates and Taught Degree Postgraduates</b>	2%	4%	10% of the approved student number targets	20% of the approved student number targets
<b>Research Postgraduates</b>	20%	One-third		

Source: HKSAR, 1997b and HKSAR, 2009b.

**Table 15: Scholarship Support for Outstanding Non-local Students**

	1999 - 2002	2002/03	2003/04	2004 - 06	2005	2008
<b>Sponsor</b>	Hong Kong Jockey Club	HKJC + KK Ho Int'l Foundation	Government (100%)	Government (50%) + Institutions (50%)	Matching Grants	Hong Kong Government
<b>Quota (No. of Students)</b>	150 per year	100 + 66	150 per year	150 per year	-	-
<b>Target</b>	Mainland students					Local & non-local students

Source: Legco, 2008.

**Table 16: Government Policies and Strategies on Internationalisation of Higher Education in Hong Kong**

Policies	1998/99	2002/03	2005/06	2008/09
<b>New “334 Reform”</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Officially approved the launching of the “334 Reform” in 2012 and advocated a new HE curriculum with three focuses:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Whole-person development</li> <li>ii. A student-centered learning experience approach</li> <li>iii. An integrated and broadened curriculum</li> </ul> </li> </ul>		
<b>Relaxation of Non-local Student Recruitment Quota</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- From 2% to 4% for undergraduates &amp; taught degree postgraduates</li> <li>- From 20% to one-third for research postgraduates</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increased to 10% of the approved targeted student number</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increased to 20% of the approved targeted student number</li> </ul>
<b>Scholarship for Outstanding Non-local Students</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Announced a three year-pilot scholarship scheme for recruiting outstanding Mainland Students</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Government replaced the direct funding with matching grant</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Set up a HK\$1 billion scholarship endowment fund for recruiting outstanding local and non-local students</li> </ul>
<b>Relaxation of Employment Policies for Non-local Students</b>				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Non-local students can:                             <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. take up part-time and summer jobs</li> <li>2. take up study-related internships and full-time employment in</li> </ol> </li> </ul>

Policies	1998/99	2002/03	2005/06	2008/09
				Hong Kong after graduation 3. stay in Hong Kong for one year after graduation to seek for employment
<b>Funding for Student Exchange</b>		- Provided HK\$120 million to expand the student exchange programmes for 3 years by providing 1,000 exchange places for undergraduates annually		
<b>Funding for Building up Institutional Capacities</b>		- UGC provided additional grants (total HK\$40 mil) for institutions to build up internationalisation capacity		- Government confirmed to provide an additional 1,840 hostel places
<b>Benchmarking for the Best Practices</b>		- Urge HEIs to benchmark for the best practices from outside Hong Kong		-

Source: From policy analysis by the researcher.